



Get Outdoors Florida! is a coalition promoting outdoor experiences to help Floridians have healthier lifestyles and develop an appreciation for our abundant natural resources.

For more Get Outdoors Florida! destinations and activities, visit www.getoutdoorsflorida.com

Get Outdoors Florida!

By Bob Wattendorf

Traditionally the summer break between school years has been about fun and getting outdoors. Labor Day is coming soon—make it a labor of love to have an outdoor adventure with a child and get reconnected with nature before this summer gets away.

More and more children are stuck indoors all summer, which has negative repercussions on their well being. A study by Hofstra University revealed 71% of mothers played outdoors more often than indoors when they were young, but only 26% of their children do.

One affect of not getting outdoors, climbing trees and digging in the yard seems to be an increase in autoimmune disorders and allergies. According to this “hygiene hypothesis,” humans evolved a two-phase immune response. When the first phase lacks practice fighting

bacteria and viruses, due to an excessively sanitary lifestyle, the other phase may overcompensate and overreact to benign stimuli creating an allergic reaction.

In an article in Science Daily (Sept. 2007), Dr. Marc McMorris advised parents to “just let kids be kids”. He encouraged parents to let them play outside with friends, and not worry about contacting dirt and germs, just clean up afterwards.

Another reason to get outdoors is the Sunshine State’s own super nutrient—the sunshine vitamin—better known as vitamin D. The body needs sunshine to create this unique vitamin that helps strengthen bones. Dr. David Jones, a local pediatrician, laments that “children and adults don’t spend enough time outdoors” and cites vitamin D deficiency and its potential to protect against pneumonia and respiratory infections. Doctors caution that wearing sunscreen to reduce chances for skin cancer is still important, since vitamin D can be obtained from milk or an old-fashioned dose of cod-liver oil.

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These Get Outdoors Florida! columns have highlighted other advantages of a healthy outdoor lifestyle connected with nature. We inform you weekly about local events and opportunities to help you enjoy those benefits and have fun.

For instance, if you want up-to-date tips on fishing, hunting and outdoor recreation, check out “Around the Bend” on WTWC-40. It airs at 5:30-6:30 on Saturday mornings, so watch it over breakfast as you get ready for an outdoor adventure. The host Randy Hopkins and his co-host Tony Young interview a local guides and outdoor enthusiasts to bring you details for a great day on the water or in the woods. Don’t forget to set your recorder, so you can study all the tips they throw at you—then put them to practice and take a kid with you for an outdoor adventure.



Bob Wattendorf is Chair of the Get Outdoors Florida! coalition