



The Importance of Playground Play

The combination of the pandemic and the accessibility of technology has resulted in children spending less time outside playing and more time on screens. This means that many children are not being exposed to the playground and as a result, are not developing important skills. The best part about playgrounds is that they are free and easily accessible as most communities have several playgrounds often within walking distance of your home.

Top 10 reasons to visit a playground:

1. Improved gross motor skills such as climbing, jumping, stepping, running, balancing, and leaping.
2. Improved core and whole-body strength. Swinging, climbing, and sliding help to develop core strength. Climbing and jumping help to build leg strength. Gripping the monkey bars and the rungs of ladders and railings helps to improve arm and hand strength which can help with fine motor skills such as controlling a pencil.
3. Improved motor planning and coordination which is the ability to plan and perform unfamiliar movements appropriately.
4. Improved social skills such as interacting, turn taking, and engaging in game play with peers.
5. Improved problem-solving skills through interacting and playing games with peers and making decisions as to which areas of the playground to explore and what risks to take.
6. Development of the vestibular and sensory systems through movements such as swinging, hanging upside down, and sliding.
7. Fresh air and vitamin D can help to support your child's overall health and well-being.
8. Improved endurance, stamina, and physical fitness levels.
9. Exercise helps children stay more focused and can help with attention and learning.
10. Improved confidence through challenging oneself and conquering fears.

What are age-appropriate playground skills?

Kindergarten and Grade 1:

- Slide down a slide
- Climb low to medium structures
- Climb steps with an alternating foot pattern
- Jump off surfaces approximately 1 foot off the ground using a two-foot take-off and landing pattern
- Support body weight while hanging onto the monkey bars for approximately 5 seconds



Grade 2 and beyond:

- Pump legs and generate momentum while on the swing
- Climb most structures on the playground
- Jump from structures 2 feet off the ground using two-foot take-off and landing pattern
- Swing from one monkey bar to the other



How to help your child to develop playground skills:

- Exposure, exposure, exposure! Visit playgrounds regularly. Try different playgrounds so that your child is exposed to a variety of playground set-ups.
- If your child is fearful or reluctant to try an activity, provide support at first by holding their hands, supporting their hips, and helping with foot placements. As your child becomes more comfortable, decrease the amount of support you provide and encourage them to keep trying. At this point, you may want to talk them through the steps they need to take.
- Once your child can demonstrate a skill safely allow them to be independent to help build their confidence.



The Importance of Playground Play

The following are general fitness recommendations to help your child to stay healthy and active:

- Health Canada recommends that children ages 5-17 years old participate in an accumulation of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day. Please see the following website for specific recommendations: <https://csepguidelines.ca/guidelines/children-youth/>
- Health Canada also recommends that screen time be limited to a maximum of 2 hours per day; limit sitting for extended periods of time.
- The Active For Life website has great ideas for physical literacy: <https://activeforlife.com/>
- Encourage your child to participate in both team and individual sports as they get older, allowing them to benefit from both types of sporting experiences.

Top Playgrounds in Calgary:

NW Calgary

- Shouldice Park Playground - Shouldice Park – 4900 Monserrat Dr. N.W.
- Thornccliffe Greenview Playground - 5600 Centre St N
- Livingston West Park Playground - Livingston – Lucas Crescent and Lucas Parade NW
- Northwest Commons Park – University District Playground - Thirsk St NW & Kovitz Ln NW
- Kenneth D Taylor School Playground - Evanston – 30 Evanscove Cir NW
- Carrington Slides Playground - Carrington – Carrington Blvd near Carrington Rd NW

NE Calgary

- 4th Avenue Flyover Park - 651 McDougall Rd NE
- Manmeet Singh Bhullar School Playground - Martindale – 1027 Martindale Blvd NE
- Prairie Winds Park Playgrounds - Westwinds/Castleridge – 233 Castleridge Blvd. NE.
- St. Patrick’s Island Playground - 1300 Zoo Rd. NE

SW Calgary

- Currie Barracks Airport Playground - Currie Barracks – 2953 Battleford Ave SW
- Eugene Coste School Playground - Haysboro – 10 Hillgrove Crescent SW

SE Calgary

- Seton – Elsa’s Tower Playground - Seton – 91 Seton Gardens SE
- Ralph Klein Park Playground - Ralph Klein Park – 12350 84 St. S.E. (near Stony Trail and 114 St SE)
- East Village Playground - East Village – 7 Ave and 6 St SE
- Belmont Mounds of Fun Park - Off Belmont Drive SE (South of 22X, West of Macleod Trail/Highway 2A)

List of inclusive playgrounds in Calgary:

<https://www.calgary.ca/csps/parks/planning-and-operations/inclusive-playgrounds.html>

