



Keeping Children Safe from Environmental Contamination While Playing Outside

Time to play outside is important part of childhood. However, some chemicals in the environment can make young children, who are still growing and developing, sick. This is called environmental contamination. Because of how young children learn, they often put their hands and fingers in their mouth. So, they may accidentally swallow environmental contaminants. **Simple steps can help keep children safe from environmental contamination while outside.**

Use this document to learn more about staying safe while getting outside.

Playing outside has many benefits for children. Time spent playing outdoors improves:



Overall health



Mental health



Sleep at night



Concentration and moods



Social skills

Lead and other dangerous chemicals can sometimes be found in the dirt where children play. The good news is there's ways to keep children safe.

Before you play outside at home, make sure it's as safe as it can be.

- Avoid using chemical fertilizer or pesticides where children play.
- Have dirt in children's play areas tested for lead. Lead is a toxic metal that is especially dangerous for young children. Even small amounts can have lifelong health effects.

Take simple steps to keep children safe



Some places that seem safe may actually have dangerous chemicals you can't see. Take children to established parks and playgrounds only as outlined in your outdoor play plan.



During the summer, check your local forecast to watch for high temperatures and poor air quality days before taking children outside. Extreme heat and air pollutants, like ozone, can harm children's health. Aim to have outdoor play before noon. If children go outside during peak hours, make sure there is shade and water for the children to drink. Encourage children to take it easy and avoid running.



Keep your home clean. Vacuum carpets and rugs routinely when children are not present. Wet wipe any hard surfaces children might touch. Avoid using bleach or other toxic chemicals, instead use non-toxic cleaning products such as vinegar or dish soap.



Try to keep children from putting anything in their mouths, unless you know it's clean.



Everyone should remove their shoes before entering the home to keep it clean and free of dangerous chemicals.



Children must wash their hands after coming back inside to remove dirt and potentially dangerous chemicals.

Visit health.ri.gov/ehrap to learn more.