

Summer Play: Beat the Heat

Summers are hot and sometimes it is difficult to spend at least one hour outside each day. What are some tips for safe summer play?

Drink Water. Make drinking water easily accessible for children and staff. Remind all children to drink water while outdoors.

- Take a water cooler out to the outdoor learning environment. Make cups and water cooler accessible for children to get water when they need it.
- To avoid throwing away plastic cups every day, each child could have a reusable water bottle with their name on it.
- Milk and sugared juices and drinks do not rehydrate or quench thirst as well as water.

Offer less intense activities.

Adjust the OLE schedule. Move outdoor playtime to the early morning when it is generally cooler outdoors. If necessary and possible, overlap outdoor play sessions so all classes can be outdoors during the cooler morning hours.

Provide temporary shade. Most outdoor learning environments do not provide enough shade. Here are some temporary shade ideas:

- Shade sail, tarp or sheet on the fence or tent pole
- Parachutes. Make temporary forts or drape them over the corner of the fence.
- Cardboard box playhouses
- Pop-up shade structures
- [Vine teepee](#) with fabric and/or annual vine

Provide “whole body” water play opportunities each day. A low cost provision can be a lawn sprinkler in the center of a grassy area or suspend a hose with a soft spray head or mister overhead. This will allow both the more active children to chase in and out of the water and the less active children to enjoy it. Many types of colorful, plastic “water guns” or squirt bottles are available and suitable for preschoolers. Children should come prepared with a change of clothes and towel for drying off.

Fans. An anchored fan, secured and out of the children’s reach, can provide a cooling breeze (and also keep mosquitoes away).



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Cool snacks. Homemade popsicles or frozen fruit are great snacks that help to cool off children from the inside out. Fresh fruits, such as watermelon, berries and peaches, have high water content and are quite refreshing served chilled. Find a shady spot to eat the snack midway through the play session. This creates a break in the action and allows the teachers and staff to check in with the children to make sure they are each safely coping with the heat.