



---

# Open Space and Air Quality

The cheapest big space available is the outdoors! Children should play outside every day of the year except in cases of extreme weather or air pollution. Outdoor play is healthy on many levels: it provides open space to decrease the spread of infections, a variety of opportunities for gross motor development, and balance in the child's play and routine. Some children who have particularly high energy levels need lots of outdoor play. Consider the following suggestions for your use of space:

- Do not concentrate toys and equipment in small areas.
- Place cots/cribs at least three feet from each other and alternating foot to head so that air circulates freely and children are not breathing directly on each other.
- Provide a covered outdoor area if possible for shade and protection from rain and snow.
- Take children outdoors as often as possible, especially during the winter months when the indoors may be overcrowded and overheated and respiratory illnesses are at their peak.

Develop a space design which promotes the separation of infants and toddlers from preschoolers which, among many advantages, can limit the spread of infectious diseases. (Many diseases are spread from children in diapers.)

## **Maintaining Good Ventilation of Indoor Space**

Adequate ventilation, humidity, and temperature control increase each person's resistance to illness and their ability to get well after sickness. In winter, dry, hot air takes moisture from the skin and mucous membranes. In summer, hot and humid air prevents a child's body from cooling off well and causes overheating. Therefore, pay specific attention to the air around you, and try to do the following:

- Keep air temperature between 68 - 85°F, if possible.
- Open windows in every room every day to circulate fresh air, even in winter (except in centrally air-conditioned or ventilated buildings). Windows must be screened, and not open wider than four inches to prevent children from falling out.
- Offer more liquids and sponge bathing in extremely hot weather to prevent overheating and dehydration. You may want to use sprinklers outside for toddlers and preschoolers. Young children, especially infants, become dehydrated more easily than adults.
- Provide extra clothing during sudden extremes of cold weather to maintain body heat.
- Ask parents to leave extra clothing at the program, if possible, or develop your own supply of extras from unneeded hand-me-downs. (Just remember that shared clothing must be washed between uses by different children). Hats should never be shared among children due to the possible spread of head lice.
- Use a cool air humidifier or cool air vaporizer to add moisture to dry air. Do not use a steam vaporizer.
- If you use an air conditioner, be sure that it is cleaned and serviced regularly. Air conditioners can build up molds and dust that are harmful allergens for some children and adults.
- Avoid strong odors in the program. Some people, including children, have allergic responses to smoke, perfume, room deodorizers, etc.