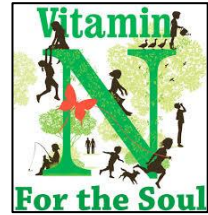


## 12 Ways to Make Sure Your Family (and You) Get your Dose of VITAMIN 'N' this Summer!



**The benefits are clear. Now, more than ever, we can feel good about getting our family and ourselves outdoors and into Nature. It reduces stress levels, improves mood, boosts our immune system and helps us to increase our physical activity!**

1. **Put nature on the calendar.** If you plan the family's sports commitments and vacations in advance, do the same for time spent in nature.
2. **Don't tear down the tree, build up the kid.** International play expert Joe Frost says the number one reason kids get hurt climbing trees is because they don't have the upper body strength to hold onto the branch. Think of manageable risk as an opportunity to build strength and resilience in your kids.
3. **Take a city hike.** In urban neighbourhoods, take your day packs, water and digital cameras and go look for nature.
4. **Moon walk.** Walk by balmy summer moons with katydids singing and lightning bugs flashing - there is much magic in the natural world and most of it is free!
5. **Go backyard camping.** Buy the kids a tent or help them make a canvas tepee, and leave it up all summer.
6. **Plant a backyard, community or high-rise vegetable garden.** If your children are little, choose seeds large enough for them to handle and that mature quickly, including vegetables.
7. **Go Native.** Replace part of your lawn with native plants. Create a backyard butterfly pollinator garden.
8. **Go Wildsnapping.** Nature photography is a great way to experience the great outdoors.
9. **Enroll in a nature camp or other outdoor-based organization.**
10. **Start or join a family nature club.**
11. **Visit a park.** [Parks Canada](#) now offers free admission to youth under 17 years. [Ontario Parks](#) has over 330 parks and each hosts many different activities. Check out their websites and be sure to visit a park this summer!
12. **Be mindful and create balance.** For every dollar invested in the virtual, put at least another dollar in the natural. Limit access to texting, computers, and TV part of the day or week. Schedule Saturday as a "Smartphone and iPad-Free Outdoor Play Day" for kids and parents.

*Adapted from: <http://www.childrenandnature.org/>*

Also, check out the  
**Children's Outdoor Charter:**  
[www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca/](http://www.childrensoutdoorcharter.ca/)

**In Ontario, every child should have the opportunity to:**

- Follow a trail
- Explore a park
- Harvest something to eat
- Swim in a lake
- Paddle a canoe
- Play in the snow
- Build an outdoor fort
- Visit a farm
- Camp under the stars
- Go fishing
- Observe plants and wildlife
- ...Or create an outdoor adventure

