

Be a Friend/Be a Hero

There's a
Hero in You

You are
Brave

You are
a Role
Model

2021 Newsletter

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KOHL'S
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 **BEACON HEALTH SYSTEM**

The Health Benefits of Nature

As the days grow longer and the weather warmer, you and your family may be spending more time outdoors. While the outdoors provides fun opportunities for the family, it also can be a source of stress relief and can be beneficial to both our physical and mental health. Looking for some outdoors activity ideas for your family? Look no further. Also read on to learn about the health benefits of outdoor activity. Lastly, check out the nature areas found in our community!

Health Benefits

According to an [article](#) from the Yale School of the Environment, time spent immersed in nature positively impacts physical health. The great outdoors has been shown to lower blood pressure and reduce levels of stress hormones. It also reduces the arousal of the nervous system and promotes the function of the immune system. While the physical benefits of outdoor activity are many, nature also does wonders for one's mental health. According to a recent study, time spent in nature can increase self-esteem, improve mood, and reduce anxiety.

Spending time outdoors is an effective way to disconnect from the stresses of daily life. If it is safe to do so, try leaving your device at home or in the car or putting the device on airplane mode when on your nature walk to fully immerse yourself in the healing power of nature.

Outdoor Ideas

Spending time in the fresh air presents many different opportunities to have fun with the whole family. Some activities include:

- **Bug hunting** – Bring your magnifying glass and observe bugs in your backyard or your neighborhood park. Get up close and personal and learn about the insects that are native to our area. Check out this [bug hunting guide](#) from Scholastic.
- **Grow a garden** – Involve the kids in growing a garden. Not will this bring the family closer to nature, but it can add some healthy foods to your dinner table. For a step-by-step guide to begin, check out [this resource](#) from the Farmer's Almanac.
- **Nature scavenger hunt** – Work with your child to make a list of things found in nature in the summer like feathers, stones, or leaves. Grab a bag and go outside to find these in the great outdoors. For scavenger hunt challenge instructions, check out [this resource](#) from Family Education
- **Backyard art** – Make a cardboard picture frame and give your child a challenge to create a picture using only from items found in nature.

Get out to Nature

Our area boasts a wealth of outdoor recreation options. Take your family for the day or just for the afternoon!

- There are many urban and rural trails in South Bend and Mishawaka. Try the Riverwalk or East Race trails. For more, check the St. Joseph County Parks & Trails [website](#).
- Elkhart County boasts a wide network of trails in its many communities. Refer to the [Trail Guide for Elkhart County](#) for ideas!