

# IT PAYS TO PLAY:

## The Health Benefits of Play

**S**taying healthy is a concern that we all share, and if you're a parent, it's a concern that extends to the entire family. Finding new, engaging and effective strategies for activities that help to build healthy habits in children can sometimes feel like an uphill battle.

The good news? There are tremendous health benefits to be found in things your kids are already doing — like playing. And with just a little bit of understanding and encouragement, you ensure that playtime is a reliable avenue for positive childhood development, with health benefits that last long after cleanup time.

Encouraging a better understanding of the many mental and physical health benefits of play is a part of the mission of the Children's Museum, where these benefits are explored and uncovered every day at each of their four area locations — Downtown, Chesterfield, Short Pump and Fredericksburg.

Through play, children are able to enhance both their physical and their mental development in healthy and productive ways — from simply getting some good exercise to skills that can even help them perform better in school. As they say at the Children's Museum, when children play ahead, they get ahead.

Research shows that play is an essential part of a child's physical and mental development — and the more often they engage in play at an active, supportive environment like the Children's Museum, the more likely they are to find success inside the classroom.

Of course, there's a physical component to most playtime as well, as any visit to the Children's Museum will confirm. Whether dancing, climbing or jumping, a child's natural energy and physical movements make play a chance to further develop and enhance healthy motor development skills. Physical activity during playtime also promotes good cardiovascular health, strength and endurance.



**Children can enhance their physical and mental development in healthy and productive ways by engaging in play at a supportive and creative environment like the Children's Museum**

Climbing is a constant activity at the Children's Museum Downtown, thanks to the giant treehouse located in the very center of the museum and at the Chesterfield location parents can literally watch their children climb the walls in the Fairytale Fitness exhibit. No matter which Children's Museum location you visit, your child will always find areas, exhibits and activities that encourage physical play.

Promoting healthy socialization skills is still another benefit of play, and another reason to visit the Children's Museum, where children are given the opportunity to meet and play with children of all backgrounds, in nearly every activity and exhibit offered. That means countless opportunities to develop essential skills like cooperation, impulse control and emotional regulation. Even learning to wait patiently for their turn to scale that previously mentioned climbing wall at the Children's Museum Chesterfield is a chance to develop self-control skills. By practicing and refining these types of skills through play, children are more likely to find both academic and social success later in life.

Physical activity is a constant at the Children's Museum Fredericksburg, thanks a wide variety of exhibits designed to exercise both growing bodies and growing minds, from using their imagination to create in the Art Studio, to climbing aboard a 10-foot-tall tire tower. Another example is "The Construction Zone," sponsored by Atlantic Builders, where children can not only investigate the fundamentals of architecture and electricity, but also build walls made out of special "bricks" and swing a hammer — a safe, harmless hammer, of course! Elsewhere in the Museum, children can enjoy our "Sun Tubes," an elaborate array of tubing that allows children to make it rain scarves and pom-poms. Children move quickly and freely to catch the items ejected from the tubes, and strengthen their hand-eye coordination at the same time.

At the Children's Museum, every visit is meant to support, explore and highlight the healthy benefits of play. Visit any Children's Museum location today to enjoy the unique exhibits and new experiences, always designed to promote learning through play!