



“The world is mud-lucious, and puddle-wonderful.” -e.e. cummings

In celebration of International Mud Day, June 29, we’re sharing some mud fun (and water play, and nature activities) for you to enjoy all week. Mud? “Eew,” some might say. But for many young children, mud is a delight as they poke, squish, squeeze, goosh, sling, and slide. Children need to experience the natural world. Playing in nature requires full-body physicality; it’s hands-on, multi-sensory exploration. Mud play allows for that innate need we all have to connect to the natural world; it supports the need to experience the world with our senses, and the need to soothe. And hands-on experience is how children learn.

As Kidminds.org explains, “Not only does playing in mud stimulate our immune system, provide valuable minerals, and improve our health...it actually makes us happier and more emotionally balanced.....Scientists discovered that bacteria *Mycobacterium Vaccae* found in mud protects against stress, reduces anxiety, and makes you calmer!”

Besides reducing stress, the open-endedness of mud sensory experiences increases higher-level brain functioning, problem solving, and concept formation.

We hope you can spend time and explore some of these experiences with your child. The more the adults around children express positive feelings about sensory play, the more comfortable children will become, especially if a child is tentative at first. And you might enjoy some healing benefits, as well. Goodness knows, we could probably all use a bit of that right now!

Enjoy!

Mud Fun!

Mud Kitchens – What could be more fun than pretending to bake, cook, mix, spread, sift, and pat their own creations? Mud pies anyone? Just add any old kitchen utensils such as pie tins, muffin tins, spoons, old pots/pans...

Other things to add for texture or decoration: sticks, rocks, leaves, bark, flowers, twigs, pine needles, sand

Explore different kinds of dirt - soil, sand, clay earth

Consistency: experiment with “more” or “less” water



The natural world inspires creativity and problem solving, experimentation and exploration.



Dig a hole in the dirt or sand; dig deep enough and see if you can find CLAY! (Our photos show store bought, but many patient diggers find the clay “treasure” if they dig deep enough). Thicker/drier mud, or clay is fun to mold, sculpt, press, and roll.



Mud sculptures. Use mud and rocks to create sturdy **mud sculptures** that last for a long time.

Mud bricks. Pack mud in ice cube trays and let them dry. Use these homemade **mud bricks** for building and engineering.

Bigger mud bricks. You can make bigger mud bricks with **empty milk cartons**. Bigger bricks mean bigger structures (don't forget to take pictures!).

Mud Engineering. Add materials like aluminum foil to make **muddy rivers** or PVC pipes for a really sophisticated engineering project.



Mud Painting

Wet mud is fun to paint with. As with other painting, try different items besides a paintbrush to paint with: flowers, pine needles, twigs with leaves, leaves, toy cars, potato masher, cookie cutters, etc.





Natural Paintbrushes

Twigs

Leaves, Cedar frawn, Pine-needles

String or twist tie

paint (store bough or homemade using recipe from a previous family pkt, or mud)

throw-away tray or jar for paint

paper, newspaper, or paper grocery bag

Find interesting materials from nature that might be used as your paintbrush bristles. Using string or a twist tie (from your bread bag), tie the leaves (or frawns...) to the end of the twigs. Pour paint into a jar or throw-away tray and your ready to paint on whichever paper you have.

Box Bird Nest

Make a human-sized bird nest using recycled materials. If you happen upon a real bird nest, or have access to photos of a real bird nest, have your child look and notice.

Use a large cardboard box, or several boxes flattened then taped together to create an enclosure.

Gather newspaper (cut into strips), leaves, bark, fabric scraps for children to decorate the inside and outside. You can affix scraps to cardboard with glue or tape.

<https://mothernatured.com/animal-craft-ideas/make-a-bird-nest-using-recycled-materials/>



Make a life-sized
Bird Nest





Water Scooping for Babies

Materials:

Container
Scooping items such as measuring cups
Water

Description:

A bucket of water and some measuring cups is a simple yet engaging exploration for infants!

Safety Note:

Keep the water level low in the container and always keep an eye on your baby while they are playing with water.

Source/credit:

Tinker Lab

<https://tinkerlab.com/water-scooping-for-babies/>



More Water Fun...

- Water painting with rollers or brushes
- Plant bucket sieve
- Plastic water bottle sprinkler
- Water works using pool noodles and funnels



Nature Fun!



ACTIVITIES:

Nature faces! Using nature to create different faces or faces with different emotions. Great lead into talking about feelings.

Nature Window – Using clear contact paper, peel backing off and tape to table or window. After gathering natural items on a “nature walk,” have child place the items on the sticky contact paper. Cover with another clear piece of contact paper, and frame with cardboard (or no frame). Hang in a window.

Cutting leaves- Gather a variety of leaves to have your child cut. Talk about the differences between the leaves or the smells. Adult supervision required.

Flower prints/pounding- Gather flowers and place on fabric that is on a stable or hard surface. Using a mallet, hammer, shoe or rolling pin have your child press or pound the flowers to create a print on the fabric.



Small World/Texture Garden- Using rocks, mud, dirt, moss or anything from outside to create a small world play space or texture garden.

Mystery Nature bag- Have the parent/child gather nature items to place in a bag or pillowcase. Take turns having each other use their hands to feel what items are in the bag and guess what the items are.

Decorated sticks- Gather sticks from a nature walk to decorate with yarn, lace or any strips of material or fabric. Add a dab of glue or tie to one end of the stick and to attach the fabric. Let your child wrap the fabric around the stick and then tuck, tie or glue the end to secure. Great fine/large motor skill.



Health



Is it safe to go to the beach, river, lakes, and pools?

Yes. Several state parks, beaches and pools have started to reopen. Be prepared: bring hand sanitizer and your face covering. Stay 6 feet apart from other people. Gatherings are still not permitted. Outdoor activities present a much lower risk of spread due to greater air flow and ventilation. Better to do something outside than indoors.

Does the coronavirus spread in the water?

No, there is no evidence that the virus spreads through swimming pools, lakes, hot tubs and water playgrounds.

Is using hand sanitizer the same as washing your hands? If not, which is better and why?

Hand Sanitizer is **not** the same as washing your hands. Washing your hands is better because it is more effective at reducing the amount of all types of germs on your hands. Hand sanitizer does not kill all germs. However, it is effective at killing the coronavirus. If soap and water are not available, using a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can help you avoid getting sick and spreading the virus to others.



COVID-19 and Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children



You may have heard news reports about a possible connection between [COVID-19](#) and a rare but serious health condition in children called Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C). We are watching this very carefully and trying to learn all that we can about it.

We want to reassure parents that most children are not affected by the coronavirus, and reports of children who become seriously ill remain rare and unusual cases.

What We Know

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made a connection between COVID-19 and Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children (MIS-C). While we do not know who is most at risk for this illness, scientists around the world are working hard to understand this syndrome and how best to treat it.

The best thing you can do to protect your child is to call your pediatrician if you have *any* concerns about your child's health. Pediatricians are open for business and able to care for your children now.

Symptoms

MIS-C has been compared to another rare childhood condition, [Kawasaki Disease](#), because it shares some of the same symptoms. But we now know this is a different illness. If you notice any of the following symptoms, call your pediatrician:

- a fever lasting more than 24 hours
- abdominal pain, diarrhea or vomiting
- rash or changes in skin color
- trouble breathing
- your child seems confused or overly sleepy

Be sure to let your pediatrician know if your child has tested positive for COVID-19 or has been exposed to the virus. Your pediatrician will let you know you if your child can be seen in the office or if you need to go to the emergency department.

While Multi-System Inflammatory Syndrome in Children sounds frightening, the American Academy of Pediatrics reminds parents that this condition is still very rare.

Remember

Call your pediatrician with any questions or concerns about your child. Do not be afraid to go to the pediatrician's office for checkups, vaccines, or if your child is sick. Your pediatrician cares about your child's health and is taking extra steps to make sure everyone is safe when they come in.

https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/chest-lungs/Pages/covid_inflammatory_condition.aspx?fbclid=IwAR0AEj1EtswwyAWcaLDCJx9Tk3tc017G-j6Wzdxlyn_NpPI8ooxJTMFL0Zg

STRESS

Imagine!

Visual imagery is a proven way to help reduce stress. It helps you to relax by focusing on a place or image that brings you comfort. It also allows you to slow down and breathe.

It's Easy!

Step 1: Sit comfortably.

Step 2: Close your eyes and "see" in your mind's eye a beautiful beach, countryside, or a favorite childhood place or memory.

Step 3: Imagine the sounds, textures, smells, tastes, and physical details. Try to see the colors, placement of trees or buildings, who you are with, what you are doing, the sound of voices, the feeling of the sand or sidewalk under your feet, etc.

Step 4: Take a minute to rest in your comforting place. Take a few deep breaths and release them slowly. Stay here for as long as you like.

TIP: Sometimes it's helpful to participate in a "guided" visual imagery tour. You can find a guided imagery audio recording on www.echmc.org.

