



6 Family Summer Activities to Do During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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As we continue to navigate through the COVID-19 pandemic, you might be wondering how to keep your family entertained while also keeping everyone safe from the virus. You might not feel safe traveling on your usual summer vacation or sending your kids to their regular summer camp. However, there are still ways to have fun this summer, all without leaving your local community. Here are six fun activities to help pass the time this summer!

Ride bikes

Riding bikes is a great family activity! It's fun to ride around and it keeps kids active.

There are health benefits of riding a bike. It's a great source of exercise. Riding a bike exercises the cardiovascular muscles. An article notes that, "Cycling is an excellent workout for the large muscles in the legs. When the leg muscles are exercised, the heart rate increases, thereby accelerating the stamina in the body" (Ahora, 2018, p.1).

Riding a bike also helps to build up muscle mass. The same article also writes, “Although it’s a known fact that cycling is a good exercise for the legs, it strengthens the entire body. It builds and strengthens muscles slowly and steadily” (Ahora, 2018, p.1).

While cycling is technically a sport, it’s also a great recreational activity to do with your family. Race one another in a friendly competition, take a scenic stroll through the park, or just take a nice cruise around the neighborhood.

Play board games

While it might seem old-fashioned, playing board games are a great way to spend time with your family. A little friendly competition between family members is a great way to bond, and laughing together feels good. Additionally, board games offer other benefits as well.

An article writes that, “Allowing your kids to play a board game helps them practice essential cognitive skills like problem-solving. The hippocampus and prefrontal cortex especially benefit from playing board games. These areas of the brain are responsible for complex thought and memory formation. Board games help the brain retain and build cognitive associations well into old age too” (Health Fitness Revolution, 2020, p.1).

Board games can also help reduce the risk of mental diseases. The same article notes, “One of the primary benefits of playing board games is reducing the risk of cognitive declines, such as that associated with dementia and Alzheimer’s. Keeping your mind engaged means you are exercising it and building it stronger. A stronger brain has lower risks of losing its power” (Health Fitness Revolution, 2020, p.1).

Pull up some chairs and have a family game night!

Play sports

Playing sports together is a fun family activity. “Whether you’re playing soccer, swimming together or even playing basketball, playing with your kids is a great way to bond and have a bit of fun together” (Simply Jennifer, 2017, p.1).

There are also health benefits to playing sports. “Another fantastic advantage of playing sports with your kids is to help with their physical health. With obesity becoming an epidemic among children, it’s even more important now than ever to teach kids the value of their physical health and how it affects their bodies in the long-term” (Simply Jennifer, 2017, p.1).

Additionally, running around and having fun outside can be a great stress reliever. Grab a ball and head outside!

Play video games

While it might drive parents crazy, video games can keep kids entertained for long periods of time. And, while it might surprise you, video games do offer benefits.

For one thing, video games can provide mental stimulation. An article notes that, "Video games often make you think. When you play video games, almost every part of your brain is working to help you achieve higher-level thinking. Depending on the complexity of the game, you may have to think, strategize, and analyze quickly. Playing video games works with deeper parts of your brain that improve development and critical thinking skills" (WebMD, 2020, p.1).

Secondly, video games can help kids socially. An article writes, "Gamers are sometimes stigmatized as being too insulated, but the opposite is actually true. The rise of multi-player experiences online has given way to a new form of socializing in which players work together to solve problems. But studies have shown games can also be the catalyst for friends to gather in person: roughly 70 percent of all players play with friends at least some of the time" (Mental Floss, 2017, p.1).

Even without the benefits, playing video games is just pure fun, plain and simple. There's nothing wrong with winding down and just having a good time sometimes.

Go on a picnic

Going on a picnic is a great way to spend time together as a family. It's a great way to focus on your family and talk to them, free of distractions. An article notes that, "Going on a picnic allows you to focus on your kids without distractions. Picnics are the perfect opportunity to make your kids feel loved and heard. Plus, you never know what you might learn from your kids" (Sunshine House Early Learning Academy, 2021, p.1).

Going on a picnic also offers mental health benefits. "The fresh air does wonders for your child's mental health. Spending time outside is shown to reduce levels of anxiety and lower levels in the parts of our brains related to mental illness. Time in the sunshine is also related to improved mood and reduced stress levels for the whole family" (Sunshine House Early Learning Academy, 2021, p.1).

This activity offers physical health benefits as well. "Time outside benefits our physical health. Breathing in fresh air is beneficial for children with respiratory problems like asthma. A picnic on a sunny day also aids in vitamin D and calcium absorption, which helps to build strong bones and teeth and helps prevent diseases like osteoporosis and rickets" (Sunshine House Early Learning Academy, 2021, p.1).

Munch on a delicious meal while enjoying the outdoors! Breathe in the fresh air and bask in the sunshine!

Watch movies

While going to the movie theater might not be an option right now, there's nothing wrong with Netflix-ing the night away at home. And, while this is probably the simplest activity on this list, it's still a great way to bond with the family!

There are benefits to watching movies together as a family. An article writes, "Spending time with your family greatly improves the emotional bonding of family members toward one another. And what better way to do so than to watch movies together. Watching movies with your loved

ones is not only an enjoyable activity for everyone, it also fosters camaraderie between family members” (DMCI Communities, 2013, p.1).

This activity also strengthens the relationship between siblings. Another article notes that, “By promoting the idea of the family time you’re promoting inclusiveness and viewing family as a whole unit. This can lessen problems between competing siblings and works to downplay a child’s insecurities and promote cohesiveness” (Premiere Outdoor Movies, 2019, p.1).

Grab some popcorn, sit back, and enjoy the movie!

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