

Bringing children to the ocean and letting them play is important for learning and development.

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There are lots of benefits from going to the beach, especially for children. Humans experience a general sense of peace and well-being while at the ocean, just ask any local surfer. The same experience happens for children, too. Not only are there health benefits, but educational benefits as well.

Going to the beach is healthy. Anyone familiar with children knows that stuffy noses and coughing are common with kids. The beach offers natural remedies. Breathing the ocean air seems to clean the lungs similar to the effect people report from spending time in therapeutic salt caves. It all comes together to clear those snotty noses. Moms just think... you might not have to wipe noses as much after a trip to the sea.

The beach is also a good place for children to run wild. Because the beach offers a nearly endless place to roam and run, children are more likely to engage in vigorous play exercises. Vigorous play is essential for children because it builds strong muscles and lungs. It is also good for the heart. In addition, vigorous outdoor play allows children the freedom to experiment with sounds. Outside is a great place for children to learn, "indoor" verse "outdoor" voices. It is also a chance for children to explore the sounds their bodies can make; from a sea lion roar to a pretend scream... children need to know what their vocal cords can do.

Children have a sense of safety when they are in the vast outdoors because they experience freedom to explore and appreciate the world around them. Coastal exploration leads to curious ponderings about the natural world. This curiosity children have during play is a building block for lifelong learning. Not only does curiosity prepare the brain for higher order thinking skills, but also inclines children to touch the things around them.



Young children need exposure to a variety of textures- something the beach has to offer. The gritty sand, wet water and slippery kelp bulbs... children have lots to touch and explore.

Cause and effect through experimentation is another benefit from coastal exploration. When a child holds a piece of bread high in the air for a seagull to snatch, she is learning about cause and effect. During cause and effect learning the child makes connections with previously learned "schema" or organized patterns of thoughts of behaviors. The studies of J. Piaget show that building schema is essential for developing into a healthy person. Exposing children to the ocean and beaches can be an important part of their education. The complexity of the coastal ecosystem is a wonderful learning laboratory for growing a child into a sophisticated person.