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# Asset HealthTalk

Keeping your health and wellbeing in the know

## ENJOY FAMILY BONDING WITH A BACKYARD CAMPOUT

Before summer ends, help your kids rediscover the outdoors by camping in your own backyard. This is a great way to encourage them to spend less time watching television and more time in nature. And the best part is it's only a few steps away from your home, and clean bathrooms, so your kids can feel safe and secure and still enjoy the experience!

To prepare for your backyard campout, see what you already have in your house. Grab a tent, sleeping bags, bedrolls, a cot or an air mattress. If you don't have these items, see if you can borrow them from friends or family members. You can also rent camping

equipment from a store that specializes in outdoor gear so you don't have to buy anything for your overnight adventure. Get the kids to help pitch the tent (a pop-up only takes a few minutes to set up), unroll the sleeping bags, and assemble the tent's interior.

Check to see if your kids have everything they need for the night. This means pillows, pajamas, a change of clothes, toys, a camera, books, binoculars, flashlights, a battery-powered nightlight, and blankets in case they get cold. Make sure they pack snacks and beverages even though a stocked fridge will be within walking distance.

If you're planning to break the campout theme by heading indoors for a traditional meal at the dining room table, make a rule: no television, texting, computers or other electronic distractions. If you are planning to eat outdoors and barbecue or roast food, get the grill going or create a fire pit for an authentic experience.

You can also build a traditional campfire and tell scary stories or sing your favorite songs around it. Check out some fun and easy games and treats below that are perfect for kids of all ages!

### GAMES BEFORE DARK

**Squirrel Tag** Choose one person to be the squirrel catcher while everyone else is a squirrel. The squirrels cling to their own tree. If there are no trees in your yard, you can use lawn chairs. When the catcher shouts "squirrel scramble," the squirrels have to run to another tree without being tagged. If you get tagged, you become the new squirrel catcher.

**Hop and Crawl** Create an obstacle course from things in your backyard. You can have your kids jump over the garden hose, do army crawls below the patio table, do a lap around the flower beds then hop through a hula hoop back to the start. They can also race each other, and once it's over, they can celebrate with a glass of lemonade.

**Catch the Bunny** Begin by passing the bunny (a small rubber ball) around a circle. After a few seconds, add a beach ball to pass around, too; that's the farmer, who's desperate to catch that bunny. If you're holding the bunny when the farmer catches up to it, you're out. To make this game even trickier and funnier, have the bunny go in only one direction around the circle, allowing the farmer to travel any which way in his effort to capture his foe.

### GREAT TREATS TO EAT

**Grilled Nachos** Put a handful of tortilla chips in the center of a sheet of aluminum foil for each person. Have everyone add their choice of pinto or black beans, diced tomatoes, avocado, black-olive slices, salsa and grated cheddar. Create a pouch by folding in the corners of the foil, then place it on the edges of the grill for 10 minutes or until the cheese has melted.

**S'mores on a Stick** Try this twist on the campfire classic, s'mores. Warm up your favorite chocolate sauce and pour it into a shallow bowl or plate, then place crushed graham crackers on another plate. Roast some marshmallows, then dip them in the chocolate and then in the crackers.

**Grilled-Cheese Tents With Campfire Fries** Make grilled cheese sandwiches and frozen shoestring fries (as directed). Cut the sandwiches in half, then stand them up lengthwise on plates so they lean into each other to form the tent. Secure them by placing a toothpick on each end. Put a dollop of ketchup near the sandwiches and stack fries on top in a pile for the campfire. Drizzle them with an extra squirt of ketchup.

### GAMES AFTER DARK

**Ghost in the Graveyard** Try this spooky twist on traditional tag. Choose one person to be the ghost and hide in the backyard. Have everyone else wait on base (like the back porch) and count "one o'clock, two o'clock," etc. Once you get to 12 o'clock, shout "Midnight! I hope I don't see a ghost tonight!" Then go hunting for the ghost in the backyard. Whoever sees the ghost first cries "Ghost in the graveyard!" Everyone then rushes back to base while the ghost tags runners. If you get tagged, you also join the "ghost" team and the game starts again. Continue playing until each person has been caught by the ghosts and the graveyard is full.

**Flashlight Finders** Hide a prize in your yard and challenge your kids to find it with their flashlights. For example, hide a plastic bag filled with all the ingredients for s'mores. If your kids are having no luck, then help them along by saying "It's getting lighter" when they get close to the prize, and say "It's getting darker" when they move away.

"7 Ideas to Go Backyard Camping," Raven Snook, parents.com, accessed July 11, 2017.

"14 Ideas for Camping Out in Your Backyard," Melody Warrick and Laura Himmelein, parenting.com, accessed July 11, 2017."

"Go Camping With Your Kids This Summer, Even In Your Backyard," HuffPost, huffingtonpost.com, Aug. 14, 2011.



# PLANT Some PEACE in Your Life With A TERRARIUM

Whether you're hoping to reap the benefits of indoor plants, want to add some nice décor to your space or are looking for a creative craft to do with your kids while they're out of school, building your own terrarium fits the bill. Houseplants can purify the air, lower your risk for illness, boost your mood, and enhance your concentration and memory.

A terrarium is a transparent container that houses a collection of small plants and is easy to create. You can find everything you need to construct this living decoration at your local garden or hardware store. You may even be able to find most of what you need laying around your house.

There are two types of terrariums – open and closed. Closed terrariums have a lid that encloses the moisture, resulting in a mini ecosystem. A small-scale water cycle is created that basically makes the garden self-sufficient. The clear container allows light to pass through so photosynthesis takes place (but it shouldn't be placed in direct sunlight). This setting is perfect for moisture-loving plants, such as ferns, ivy and moss. Open terrariums do not have a lid. They're great for plants that like drier conditions, such as succulents and cacti. Since they're open to the air, a water cycle isn't created and, therefore, need to be watered more often.

## HERE'S HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN MINIATURE INDOOR GARDEN:

1. Start with a transparent container, such as a mason jar or old vase. The larger the opening, the easier it will be to work with.
2. Make sure the container is clean and dry. If you want a closed terrarium, it should be sealable.
3. Place rocks or gravel at the bottom to help with water drainage.
4. Insert dried moss, mulch, sponge or the equivalent that's saturated, but not drenched with water.
5. Layer a couple inches of dirt; nutrient-dense potting soil mixed with the native plant soil is ideal.
6. Add plants. Experiment with colorful varieties. Your selections should fit in the container without touching the walls. Don't forget to remove any grime on the glass from the planting process.
7. If you're creating a closed environment, wait 24 hours to allow your new garden to breathe and adjust. After a day, make sure the soil is moist and then go ahead and seal it up.



"The Perks of Being a Plant Lover," The Healthline Editorial Team, healthline.com, Oct. 25, 2016.

"DIY: A Mindful Terrarium," Dr. Kathleen Hall, mindfullivingnetwork.com, Aug. 12, 2015.



## How to Make Homemade Pesto

*If you love pesto, but cringe when you see its steep price tag at the store, this recipe is for you. One of the perks of summer is you can get huge bundles of basil at farmers markets for a steal to make homemade pesto on a budget. You can prepare large batches to freeze and have on hand throughout the year. Basil is also hardy and easy to grow in a pot at home. It can help ward off summer pests, like mosquitoes, too.*

*Last month we showed you how to make pizza on the grill. You can use this recipe to create a delicious grilled pie with pesto, mozzarella and fresh or sun-dried tomatoes. Pesto can also be used on sandwiches or wraps, salads, as a spread on bread and crackers, or as a dip. There are all kinds of pesto you can make instead of always using basil as the base – cilantro, arugula, sun-dried tomato and walnut, to name a few. A simple search online will yield countless recipes you can try.*

### BASIL PESTO

- 2 cups fresh basil leaves (no stems)
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts
- 2 large garlic cloves
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup freshly grated parmesan

Combine basil, pine nuts and garlic in a food processor; pulse until it's finely minced. With the machine running, slowly pour in the oil and process until the mixture is smooth. Add the cheese and process briefly – just long enough to incorporate it into the mix. Store in the refrigerator for up to a week or in a sealed plastic container or glass jar in the freezer for up to a year. A handy tip is freezing pesto in ice cube trays, then placing the frozen cubes in a plastic freezer bag so you have individual portions on hand. You can remove a frozen block of pesto and thaw it for a quick meal.

(Adapted from cooking.nytimes.com)