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A Parent's Guide to Safe Outdoor Play for Children with Autism

Outdoor play has profound benefits for children. Beyond physical activity, outdoor play contributes to a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development, improves sensory skills, and boosts moods and concentration.

Unfortunately for children with autism and other special needs, the outdoors is also fraught with risk. So how can parents design safe outdoor spaces where special needs children can play worry-free? Let these resources from MORC help you design a safer backyard for your family.

Childproofing: Backyard Safety

Childproofing is important for any kid-friendly space, but especially when you have a child with autism or other special needs.

- Install a privacy fence with [a latching gate](#) to protect children prone to wandering.

- Keep dangerous plants out of the yard. Some backyard plants are [poisonous if ingested](#) or cause pain and irritation.
- Even trees may pose a risk. Look for an [affordable tree service near me](#) if you have trees that drop branches, attract bees and wasps, or contain toxins.
- Watch out for water. Pools should be secured with a [gate and alarm](#). Pair fencing with a pool safety cover for added protection.
- Avoid using driveways as play areas. Always supervise children in driveways and use temporary barriers to [separate play areas](#) from vehicles.

Safe & Sensory Outdoor Spaces

Providing sensory experiences is a great way to encourage your child with autism to get outdoors.

- When choosing playground equipment for children with autism, [look for playsets](#) that offer tactile, auditory, visual, and vestibular stimulation.
- A variety of specialty swings are available, including sensory swings, full support swings, and swings [for wheelchair users](#).
- Sand and water tables are [affordable options for sensory play](#) in the backyard.
- Parents can even plant a sensory garden filled with interesting [scents, textures, and sounds](#).

More Tips for Safe Outdoor Play

Here are more tips for keeping your child safe and comfortable outdoors.

- Keep fall protection in mind when choosing ground cover. Rubber mulch, rubber tiles, and artificial turf are [low-maintenance options](#) for play areas.
- [Natural ground covers](#) should be chosen for their dense growth habit and ability to withstand high traffic.
- Provide shady areas where kids can play. Shade sails, awnings, and [outdoor curtains](#) create shade without trees.

Indoors may seem like the safest place for a child with autism, but kids who don't get enough outdoor play miss out on important developmental benefits. Instead of letting worry keep your special needs child indoors, create a safe and stimulating backyard where your child can thrive.