

# PRESCRIPTION FOR PLAY!



Symptoms: stress, anxiety, obesity, learning delays, self-regulation challenges

Causes: (please check all that apply)

- Too much screen time
- Over scheduled activity calendars
- Lack of safe play spaces
- Increased pressure for academic achievement
- Reduced free playtime at school



Treatment: Prescription for Play

The Children's Discovery Museum knows that play is serious business. In fact, 90 percent of a child's brain is developed by age five and play is vital for those neural connections. Specifically, parent-child and imagination-based play enhance brain function and structure, promotes social-emotional, cognitive and language skills, and helps cultivate bonds between children and their parents or caregivers. Meaningful play experiences can be a buffer against stress and encourage resilience. Strong early brain development also improves future learning, increases earning potential, and reduces health risks.

If play is so important, why are so many children facing a play deficit? The answer is not an easy one because it affects both wealthy and impoverished households. Play can be limited due to hurried lifestyles and over scheduled activities, or too much access to screen time and stationary entertainment. Play can also be limited due to lack of safe places to play, fewer play resources, or parental focus on day-to-day survival. Finally, many parents and caregivers simply don't realize how important play is in their child's development.

**Prescription for Play** is a partnership between the Children's Discovery Museum and local healthcare providers that **is designed to break down barriers to play, encourage regular play and help parents understand the benefits of play for their child's future.** Pediatricians throughout McLean County will screen their patient families to assess current play habits and discuss the importance of play in child development and health. Providers then have the opportunity to offer a Prescription for Play to encourage the family to play together in a safe environment. Each prescription gives the patient family a free pass to play at the Museum and opens the door to even more supportive programs such as Museums for All, scholarships, and Family Fun Nights. This partnership commits to following up with families to develop new relationships and inspire the love of learning through the power of play.

This program was created following a 2018 clinical report by the American Association of Pediatrics stressing the importance of play in healthy child development. Proceeds from Doctors in Concert will fund the Prescription for Play pilot program with local pediatric practices.