

TOP 10 JAZZ TRACKS FOR TOTS • BATTLE OF THE BOTTLED MILKS

TimeOut

New York

Kids



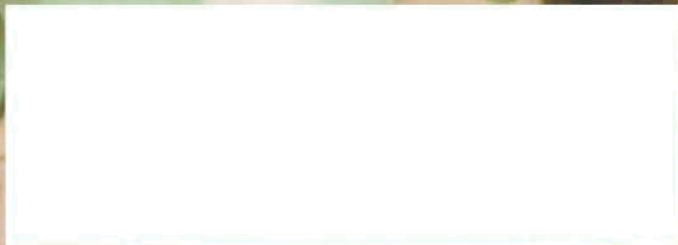
JULY 2008 ISSUE 33 \$2.99

COOL  
off

**Abigail  
Breslin**

*American Girl:  
the movie,  
the obsession*

**TOP POOLS AND BEACHES**  
**BEST BARS FOR FAMILIES**  
**SPLASHIEST SUMMER EVENTS**  
**INDOOR ESCAPES**



# First Words



First Words

## The naked city

Should New York playgrounds be clothing-optional? By **Nicole Caccavo Kear**

As the weather heats up, little New Yorkers strip down. And by the time July rolls around, they can often be found in nothing but their Skivvies—if that. Letting it all hang out is as quintessential a part of childhood summers as blowing bubbles or chasing the ice cream truck. It doesn't just feel good, it is good, giving kids access to body parts that are usually covered and offering the opportunity to talk about those parts.

"Developmentally, young kids are curious about their bodies and other people's, too," says Logan Levkoff, a New York sexuality educator and the author of *Third Base Ain't What It Used to Be*. "Naked time allows them to be free—no restrictions, no sanctions from society. It's a matter of comfort. Quite frankly,

on a hot, sticky day, wouldn't we adults like to shed our clothes, if not for body-image issues or societal views?"

But unlike in the country or the burbs, where there's ample room for nude frolicking in the privacy of backyards, New York's great outdoors is very much a shared space—which can complicate cavorting full monty. Here's what to bear in mind when your babe begins to bare all in public:

**Brace yourself for reactions** A topless toddler's not likely to incite much debate, but lose the bottom and head-shaking may be the least of the responses you get, especially if the little one isn't potty-trained. "I'm all for freedom of expression, but there is a time and place for nudity, and a big public

playground is not the place," says Joanna Smith, a Park Slope mom of two. "When I see kids without diapers in the sprinklers, I mention to their caregivers that it

**"I say, if you get shook, don't look," offers one mom.**

can spread disease." Even if other people's opinions don't bother you much ("I say, if you get shook, just don't look," offers Lulu Cohen, mother of a four-year-old in Bayside, Queens), you may not want any negative reactions aired within earshot of your child. According to Lisa Spiegel, cofounder of Soho Parenting Center, toddlers and even infants

can register other people's disapproval. Advises Levkoff: "Just be prepared to tell your child, not everyone is comfortable with nudity, but there is nothing wrong with it. Parents are definitely better off showing children that it is important to be who you are and not worry about other people's judgments."

Spiegel agrees that "teaching children to stick to their beliefs and to follow their hearts is great," but says that lesson "comes much later. First, we have to teach regard for community." Her vote: Keep the bottom covered in public.

**Don't freak out your kid** Tesorina Chen, mother of a two-year-old in Long Island City, says it's not just buttinsky strangers she worries about, but menacing