



Health revealed

Asthma Risk Lower for Rural Children, Allergens Higher in Cities

By [Kristie Hayes](#) on Sep 07, 2011



Asthma risk may be increased by being too clean? There is some truth to that notion as rates of asthma and allergies are on the rise for city and suburban kids versus their rural-dwelling counterparts. Nature tells us the diversity is a good thing for many reasons, and [two new studies](#) comparing the presence of different bacteria and fungi and the risk of asthma between children living on farms and those in the suburbs of Central Europe confirms that.

Using genetic screening and culture techniques, researchers determined how many different bacteria and fungi were in the bedroom and mattress dust of kids in rural and suburban Central Europe and correlated that to the rates of asthma and other respiratory conditions determined through antibody tests and questionnaires. Children living in rural areas were exposed to a greater variety of bacteria and fungi compared to their suburban counterparts and an indirect correlation between the level of microbial diversity and their risk of asthma was observed. These results support [previous research](#) which has shown that children who grow up on farms are less likely to suffer from asthma and allergies and this study provides more insight into why that is. Neither study identified one single microorganism that offered more protection nor how they might do it.

Are more suburban and city kids living in households where antibacterial soap, hand wash, wipes and household cleaners are being used increasing their risk of developing asthma and other allergies? We may be increasing the prevalence of antibiotic-resistance in bacteria and preventing our children's immune systems from developing properly—a scary combination. One [study](#) looking at children with moderate to severe asthma living in major U.S. cities found that the three top sensitivities in order are to cockroaches, dust mites and mold. While indiscriminately killing bacteria, are we allowing the most common allergens to take over? If studies in the U.S. show similar results, we may have to reconsider our definition of “clean.”

HEALTH POLL

Which Food Allergies Do You Suffer From?

- Shellfish
- Peanuts
- Gluten
- Milk
- Tree nuts
- Fish
- Chocolate

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