HEALTHY TIPS

Dirt Is Good. Why Kids Need To Be Exposed To Germs

By bestfolkmedicine · 22/07/2019 · 3 min read



When Jack Gilbert, a scientists working at the University of Chicago who studies microbial ecosystems became a daddy for the first time, he received various advice on how to take proper care of his kid.

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This included tips like when to sterilize the baby's pacifier or when to give him antibiotics and when not to.

After his second child was born, he decided to find out what's really known about the risks concerning children's contact with germs.

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He found out that most of the exposures were advantageous. Namely, if the pacifier that fell on the floor is licked by the parent and then placed back into the baby's mouth, it actually helps strengthen their immunity!

So, should all parents expose their children to dirt?

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Is Dirt that Good for Our Little Ones?

The scientist co-authored a book titled *Dirt Is Good: The Advantage of Germs for Your Child's Developing Immune System*. The book's format is a Q&A and its goal is to answer a lot of questions which Gilbert collected from parents throughout the years.

In the book, the authors write that parents get many things wrong, including excessive sterilization of the child's environment and doing their best to prevent their children from getting dirty.

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Hence, if the child was playing in the mud in the garden, a lot of parents will immediately wipe them from the dirt with antiseptic wipes or get them in the shower.

Also, many of them keep them away from dogs and cats, but from other animals too. They don't want the animal to lick their children's face. However, it appears that this is quite good for our children!

He explains that hand sanitizers should be avoided and that a mild soap and warm water suffices, but that the key is not to exaggerate or get nervous when our children get dirty.

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What about the 5-Second Rule?

Many parents believe that if something falls on the floor and if we pick it up under 5 minutes, it's clean. But, this rule doesn't exist and microbes can attach to food in milliseconds.

However, this makes no difference, unless something is dropped in a place where there is high risk of harmful pathogens, which is probably not the case in your home if you clean it regularly and don't wear shoes inside.

Should Parents Wash or Lick a Pacifier when it Falls on the Ground?

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According to a study done with more than 300,000 children, it's better to lick it. Namely, the parents in the study who licked the pacifier and put it back into their children's mouths led to lower occurrence of allergies, eczema, and asthma in the children.

At the end of the study, their health was also stronger.

The scientist also believes that allergies in our children are often a result of overprotection.

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Namely, in the past, we allowed our children to be among animals and plants and soil more often. Now, life is happening more indoors rather than outdoors. We constantly sterilize our environment and cause the immunity to become hyper-sensitized.

The small soldier cells in the body known as neutrophils become pro-inflammatory when they don't find what to do and as soon as they see a foreign substance, for example, a piece of pollen, they become over inflammatory and consequently, lead to eczema, food allergies, and asthma.

Allow Your Child to Get Dirty

All in all, this doesn't mean that your child should be left in dirt without a shower or that his/her hygiene should suffer so that they are healthy. The goal is to allow them to experience the world.

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Get them vaccinated and help them become stronger through moderate and beneficial exposure. And, last but not least, make sure they follow a healthy diet rich in veggies and fruits and other whole foods to help them strengthen their immunity in the right way.

Sources:

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