

MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

TOPIC: THE HYGIENE HYPOTHESIS: TOO CLEAN DURING COVID?
REPORT: MB #5113

BACKGROUND: While the pandemic made us more aware of germs and how to avoid them can you be too hygienic? Experts say, maybe! Some experts theorize that kids who are raised in extremely clean environment may be more likely to develop an allergy, asthma, and allergic skin conditions because their immune systems aren't sufficiently exposed to germs and certain infections that kids can get. In general, it is wise to not be overly protective against bacteria and viruses that we encounter on a daily basis, and it is important to wash our hands before eating or touching our eyes or nose, but experts say parents should avoid going overboard.

(Source: <https://www.uhhospitals.org/Healthy-at-UH/articles/2022/04/living-with-germs-has-its-upside>)

DIAGNOSING: The hygiene hypothesis has evolved as more sophisticated information emerges about the gut microbiome or how microbes that surround us are more diverse. Microbes can permeate our bodies and influence our health and the sophisticated tools that look at genetic signatures of various microorganisms now suggest that we are awash in microbes, and some are more harmful than others. But the hypothesis has not yet yielded much practical advice. One potential exception is the use of probiotics that reduces eczema in babies at a higher risk for allergies. Recently, the World Allergy Organization issued guidelines stating that pregnant women with allergies or asthma can consider taking probiotics.

(Source: <https://www.uclahealth.org/vitalsigns/is-it-possible-to-be-too-clean#:~:text=Now%20doctors%20think%20that%20babies,disease%20and%20allergies%2C%E2%80%9D%20Dr.>)

PREVENTION: When COVID-19 was at an all-time high, the CDC recommended you wash your hands with soap and water after being in a public space or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Washing and sanitizing your hands a lot can leave your skin dry and or cracked so adding a good moisturizing lotion to the hand washing routine. Some experts suggest that increasing healthy habits like hand washing and sanitizing for a short period of time would not have a detrimental effect on a person's immune system. Allergist and immunologist James Fernandez, MD, PhD, from the Cleveland Clinic says there's no scientific evidence to suggest that temporarily stepping up cleaning is dangerous to immune health.

(Source: <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/can-being-too-clean-weaken-your-immune-system/>)

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If this story or any other Ivanhoe story has impacted your life or prompted you or someone you know to seek or change treatments, please let us know by contacting Marjorie Bekaert Thomas at mthomas@ivanhoe.com