



## Farming Today Keeps the Doctor Away

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An article by Associated Press recently highlighted the results of a study (August 2016) in the New England Journal of Medicine on the immune systems of Amish and Hutterite children. While the study explored down to the cellular level, (scientists even sampled dust particles from Amish and Hutterite homes!) the article simplified the results. In a nutshell, Amish children were shown to have more resilient immune systems as well as a lower prevalence of asthma. Most of the credit for these results is being given to the hands-on, fresh air, farming lifestyle.

Carole Ober, a University of Chicago geneticist and one of the coauthors of the 2016 study joked that, "We could just say put a cow in everyone's house and no one would have asthma anymore, but of course that's not easy." The point is that exposure to dirt, dander, dust, hay, and even wastes can help strengthen one's immunity "muscles." This further supports the objectives of a similar study started in 2013 from UW Madison School of Medicine and Public Health. Dr. Matthew Keifer, director of the National Farm Medicine Center at Marshfield Clinic and a co-investigator on the study, said, "It should come as no surprise that we would study the farmer's lifestyle, one of the healthiest we know of, to search for ways to improve health in the general population."

So in addition to being physically active, getting plenty of fresh air, getting enough sleep and eating right, it seems the newest prescription is to get out and get your hands dirty. The next time you look down at your grease covered hands and manure splattered jeans, just think, you are doing your body some good. Resist the urge to enter the world of endless soaps, wipes, and sanitizers. Let the kids go outside, make friends with a cow, and get some dirt under their nails.

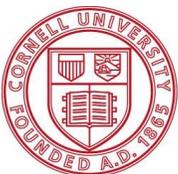


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