

# A Daycare Rewilded its Yard and the Children Became Healthier: Now the Whole Nation Is Doing it



Finland is doubling down on [evidence from four years ago](#) that definitively shows how children can avoid diseases and allergies throughout their lives if they're permitted to get down and dirty in daycare.

Dozens of comparative studies have previously found that children who live in rural areas and are in contact with nature have a lower probability of catching an illness resulting from disorders in the immune system—and a lower risk of developing coeliac disease, allergies, atopy, and even diabetes.

A 2021 study conducted at a Finnish daycare showed that repeated contact with nature-like elements five times a week diversified the body's microbes which offered protection against diseases transmitted through the immune system in daycare children.

"This is the first in which these changes offering protection against diseases have been found when adding diversified aspects of nature to an urban environment", said Aki Sinkkonen, a research scientist.

Sinkkonen was there too—inspecting a "chocolate cake" baked with love out of mud and sand by a five-year-old. The daycare boasts a vegetable patch, which uses the daycare's composter to provide dirt-covered, healthy veggies for the center's kitchen.

Sinkkonen's original study identified lower levels of bacteria—linked with inflammatory disease—in the 75 kids' gut microbiomes. Their blood samples showed higher levels of circulating immune agents called T cells, while their skin carried lower densities of infectious disease-causing bacteria.

If that profile can be replicated nationwide, a huge financial and health burden could be lifted from the national community. "This area has not been forested for 200 years so this is a substitute," Sinkkonen told the Guardian.