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### **Atopy in children of families with an anthroposophic lifestyle.**

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**BACKGROUND:** Increased prevalence of atopic disorders in children may be associated with changes in types of childhood infections, vaccination programmes, and intestinal microflora. People who follow an anthroposophic way of life use antibiotics restrictively, have few vaccinations, and their diet usually contains live lactobacilli, which may affect the intestinal microflora. We aimed to study the prevalence of atopy in children from anthroposophic families and the influence of an anthroposophic lifestyle on atopy prevalence. **METHODS:** In a cross-sectional study, 295 children aged 5-13 years at two anthroposophic (Steiner) schools near Stockholm, Sweden, were compared with 380 children of the same age at two neighbouring schools in terms of history of atopic and infectious diseases, use of antibiotics and vaccinations, and social and environmental variables. Skin-prick tests were done for 13 common allergens, and we took blood samples from children and their parents for analysis of allergen-specific serum IgE-antibodies. **FINDINGS:** At the Steiner schools, 52% of the children had had antibiotics in the past, compared with 90% in the control schools. 18% and 93% of children, respectively, had had combined immunisation against measles, mumps, and rubella, and 61% of the children at the Steiner schools had had measles. Fermented vegetables, containing live lactobacilli, were consumed by 63% of the children at Steiner schools, compared with 4.5% at the control schools. Skin-prick tests and blood tests showed that the children from Steiner schools had lower prevalence of atopy than controls (odds ratio 0.62 [95% CI 0.43-0.91]). There was an inverse relation between the number of characteristic features of an anthroposophic lifestyle and risk of atopy ( $p$  for trend=0.01). **INTERPRETATION:** Prevalence of atopy is lower in children from anthroposophic families than in children from other families. Lifestyle factors associated with anthroposophy may lessen the risk of atopy in childhood.

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