

Large British child-cancer study published

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British scientists say children from affluent families in less densely populated environments are at high risk of childhood cancers.

The report is said to be the largest study yet focusing on incidence of cancer in British children. The study by the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment used data from more than 30,000 children and found children in richer parts of Britain are more likely to develop many types of cancer and the same is true for children living in isolated rural areas, rather than crowded cities, The Times of London reported.

The researchers said their findings support the hypothesis that many childhood cancers are triggered by a cell mutation developed before birth, followed by an infection in infancy.

It's believed that prompts an abnormal immune response that causes the disease. Scientists say children raised in too clean an environment either develop impaired immune systems or, alternatively, "urban" viruses could be finding their way into rural populations, causing genetic damage that leads to cancer, the Times reported. But children living in crowded environments are likely to be exposed to viruses and become immune to them.

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