

More stress hormones found in children cared for at home than in kindergartens ^[1]

Does the research finding flip our understanding of stress in the nursery and kindergarten setting?

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Excerpts

Previous research has revealed that toddlers display high stress levels in kindergartens.

Research from Norway and other European countries shows that the level of the stress hormone cortisol rises in children during the day.

But what does research show about children who are cared for at home? The truth is that stress studies have not included this population in their research.

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The researchers strongly expected that the children in kindergartens would have more stress hormones in their saliva.

But the results showed the opposite.

The children at home had higher levels of cortisol throughout the day than the kindergarten children.

Could this really be the case?

Tervahartiala does not want to conclude that being at home is more stressful based just on her own research. "But that is one of several possible explanations for the higher cortisol," she says.

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The research on cortisol also has another weakness. No one knows for sure how high the cortisol level has to be for it to affect children negatively.

"We don't yet know whether these cortisol levels are harmful stress or simply stress that contributes to learning," says Drugli. "It's almost certainly not so-called toxic stress, but we don't know whether it could still lead to vulnerabilities in the long term."

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Region: Europe ^[3]

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stress levels ^[5]

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