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The notion that too much cleanliness can be bad for your health and that children need to be exposed to germs is a dangerous myth, according to a public health body. The Royal Society for Public Health (RSPH) said the hygiene hypothesis – that allergies are caused by too much cleanliness, by killing off the bugs we need to challenge our immune systems – has entered the public imagination and is being misinterpreted. “The time has come when we need to sort this one out,” said Sally Bloomfield, the honorary professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, who is lead author of a report called Too Clean or Not Too Clean. “The public is becoming very confused.” Playing outside in the dirt will certainly do children good by exposing them to good bacteria, the RSPH stressed, but it was vital that they washed their hands before eating and after going to the toilet. Two out of five people in a survey wrongly thought chil-

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