

## Why not encourage your child to get dirty by making a mud kitchen in your garden...

Examples for utensils:

Empty yoghurt pots; plastic or metal containers; plastic scoops you find in dried baby milk; jelly moulds; wooden spoons.

You can even add fillings to your mud pies by using shells and stones!

Should you wish a copy of our free Messy Play booklets please contact Sharon at [sharonmcccluskie@playscotland.org](mailto:sharonmcccluskie@playscotland.org)

Should you wish to share your mucky pups photos please email them to us at [info@playscotland.org](mailto:info@playscotland.org)

Further information on Play Scotland including our Parents & Families Section and our KidsZone can be found at [www.playscotland.org](http://www.playscotland.org)

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"Every child should have mud pies ... and any child who has been deprived of these has been deprived of the best part of education."

Luther Burbank  
(American horticulturalist and botanist, 1849 - 1926)

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# XIPLAY SCOTLAND

## Mucky Pups



Dear Parent,

You probably know instinctively that dirt is good for building up your child's immune system. You might be pleased to know that Scientists from University of California have published research to back this up. It shows that if children are too clean it can impair the skin's ability to heal<sup>1</sup>. However, try and make sure young children don't actually eat the dirt!

Also, normal bacteria living on the skin triggers a pathway that helps prevent inflammation when we get hurt. The bugs dampen down overactive immune responses that can cause cuts and grazes to swell<sup>2</sup>.

Many believe our obsession with cleanliness is to blame for the recent boom in allergies as children's immune systems are not being allowed to develop naturally.

Evidence is growing that dirt and germs can protect against disease – and that our indoor-based, ultra-clean lifestyles are bad for our health<sup>3</sup>.

According to hygiene hypothesis, asthma, eczema, hay fever and childhood diabetes are all being fuelled by childhoods in which youngsters rarely roll in the mud, splash in puddles or play with animals<sup>4</sup>.

Research also suggests bacteria-exposure not only boosts our immune systems, but alters our vulnerability to conditions such as depression and exposure to friendly soil bacteria could improve mood by boosting the immune system just as effectively as antidepressant drugs<sup>5</sup>.

**“The natural immune system does not have as much to do as it did 50 years ago because we've increased our efforts to protect our children from dirt and germs”**  
Marc Morris<sup>6</sup>

Are you one of the many parents who don't want their child's clothes to get dirty. You often hear when out and about in parks parents shouting “don't get dirty...” When really, in this day and age of the washing machine, there is no need for a child to keep their clothes clean!

Children enjoy messy play and want to get muddy, jump in puddles... in fact the muckier they become, the more fun it can be. Children need to know that it is OK for them to go out and get dirty. Keep an 'old' set of clothes for outdoor play.

Messy Play can also help develop children's senses as they explore the different textures of materials and helps them develop their imagination which allows them to play freely.

Playing in the mud is just as much as fun as playing with sand, but more easily accessible for some. It is also great exercise for children, as digging is hard work!

Yours playfully

Sharon

#### References

<sup>1 & 2</sup> Dirt can be good for children, say scientists, BBC News <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/8373690.stm>

<sup>3 & 4</sup> How keeping children too clean can wreck their immune systems, Daily Mail, 22 March 2012 <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-2118871/How-keeping-children-clean-wreck-immune-systems.html#ixzz11ERZIPC8>

<sup>5</sup> Depressed? Go Play in the Dirt <http://www.livescience.com/7270-depressed-play-dirt.html>

<sup>6</sup> The Hygiene Hypothesis: Are Cleaner Lifestyles Causing More Allergies For Kids?, Science Daily <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/09/070905174501.htm>

Have you ever looked at a child covered in mud and laughed? Children, no matter what age they are, love playing in the mud and getting dirty ...and what's more... it's FREE!!

## Dirt is GOOD for you!!

UK experts, working on behalf of Persil, have revealed the definitive list of 33 things kids should do before their 10th birthday as part of their 'Dirt is Good' campaign:



### Exploding Art - One for Outdoors!

What you need:

Large piece of paper

Zip lock sandwich bags

Baking Soda

Cup and tablespoon

Toilet paper

Craft paint

White vinegar

#### What to do:

Spread the paper on the ground. Scoop one tablespoon of baking soda onto the centre of a square of toilet paper, fold into a bundle and place in one corner of the sandwich bag. Mix one third of vinegar with one tablespoon of paint and pour into the opposite corner of the bag. Seal the sandwich bag quickly, with a little air inside, and mix by shaking slightly and set on the paper.

Stand back! The bag will inflate and burst.

You now have your work of art! Try using different colours of paint on the same piece of paper.

**Note: Not suitable for under 3s. Cheaper zip lock bags work best!**