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# Anxious parents create cottonwool children

**Fearful parents are inhibiting their children's development and wellbeing, according to researchers at the University of WA.**

The report was led by Professor Stephen Zubrick from Subiaco's Telethon Institute for Child Health Research and Assistant Professor Lisa Wood, deputy director of UWA's centre for the built environment and health.

They reviewed evidence of parental anxiety as a barrier to children's physical activity such as walking or cycling to school and playing at parks.

They found that parents often had distorted perceptions of stranger danger which could curtail children's freedoms and physical activity.

The report said that changes in Australian family life, including

the earlier start to education and the need for care outside of the home, restricted where children could be left unsupervised.

"The negative impacts of parental fear and the resulting cottonwool kids are increasingly being recognised as having adverse impacts on children, including less active lifestyles and increasing obesity levels," Assistant Professor Wood said.

"Children are also missing out on opportunities to develop important life skills that can be learnt through independent play and being allowed to move around within their neighbourhoods."

The researchers recommended promoting walking and cycling and empowering parents to be less fearful.