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Virissa Lenters, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in environmental epidemiology and exposome science at the University Medical Center Utrecht in the Netherlands. She currently leads research on how the urban and chemical exposome affect child development and disease susceptibility, including the independent and mediating effects of the microbiome. She earned her BScH in Life Sciences at Queen's University, Canada; her MSc and PhD in Epidemiology at Utrecht University, the Netherlands; and carried out postdoctoral research at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health and UC San Diego, USA. In addition to etiological research, she has focused on advancing approaches to evaluate the risks of chemical mixtures. She has also investigated the health effects of environmental microbial exposures, microplastics, and air pollution within several EU and nationally funded projects, and has contributed to (inter)national human health risk assessments.



Urbanisation and our microbiome

The gut microbiome is highly individual and we are discovering more about the external (non-dietary) factors that shape it. New results from the large Dutch Microbiome Project provide more insight into how host and environmental factors, including aspects of the indoor and built environment, are associated with gut microbiota composition and function. Characterizing exposome–microbiome and microbiome–mediated disease associations adds to our understanding of the consequences of urbanisation on health, and of potential mitigation strategies.