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If your mother was under 25 when she had you, you may live to be 100

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The chance of receiving a telegram from the Queen is almost doubled for those born mother before her 25th birthday, according to a study published tomorrow.

Previous research based on data relating to American centenarians suggested that first-born children are more likely to live to 100 but now it seems that the real reason is that the of first-born children is likely to be younger.

This finding, to be released at the 59th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society of America in Dallas, Texas, may have social implications because many women now postponing childbearing due to career demands, according to Leonid Gavrilov of the Department of Ageing, University of Chicago.

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Working with Natalia Gavrilova, using data from a study of 198 centenarians born in the US in 1893, he found that the odds of becoming a centenarian are 1.7 times higher for first-born children, compared to their later-born siblings from the same family. "This is really interesting to observe that the survival advantage for first-born is so large," he says. "Being born to a young mother is the major predictor of human longevity with two times higher odds to live to 100."

"Even at the age of 75 it is still important to be born to a young mother in order to live to 100, because the odds of exceptional survival are 1.9 times higher."

"What is really interesting is that the benefits of being born to a young mother are observed only when the mother is your mother," says Ms Gavrilova. "This may have important social and actuarial implications because so many women now decide to postpone childbearing due to career demands."

Why being born to a particularly young mother is so beneficial for long-term survival is not yet known, and the authors plan to test a number of possible explanations. "If the best and most vigorous maternal ova cells are used first, very early in life, this could explain why particularly young mothers produce particularly long living children" says Mr Gavrilov.

Another idea is put forward by Ms Gavrilova: "Some particularly young women may be born with more severe congenital diseases and latent infections that interfere with optimal foetus development."

Weekly Telegraph

FEATURE FOCUS



"This research helps us better understand the predictors of longevity and quantify the implications for society and business," said Thomas Edwalds, the head of mortality re the Munich American Reassurance Company.

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