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Babies of older fathers may be less healthy – 3rd November, 2018

Level 4

A study says babies of older fathers may be more likely to have health problems. Scientists studied data on over 40 million births between 2007 and 2016. Compared to babies born to fathers aged 25 to 34, babies born to fathers over the age of 45 had more health problems. They said babies could be born prematurely, be underweight or spend time in an intensive care unit. Researchers said babies born to older fathers were less healthy.

A doctor said more research was needed to prove that older fathers have less-healthy babies. The doctor said: "I think it's important to understand that the risks we are seeing are modest....the risk may not change much." The doctors said governments need to be aware of these risks. He said: "There may be public health implications of men...waiting longer to conceive." He said: "While the oldest father ever is 96...the risk...may increase if fathers conceive later."

Level 5

A study in the USA reports that babies of older fathers may be more likely to have health problems. Stanford University scientists studied data on 40,529,905 births between 2007 and 2016 to find out if a father's age affects his child's health. Researchers found that compared to babies born to fathers aged 25 to 34, babies born to fathers over the age of 45 were at greater risk of having health problems. These included being born prematurely, having a low birth weight or being admitted to an intensive care unit. Babies born to older fathers were generally not as healthy.

One doctor said more research was needed to prove that older fathers conceive less-healthy babies. The doctor said: "I think it's important to understand that the risks we are seeing are modest. So for an individual, the risk may not change much." The research data could show that governments might want to be aware of these risks. He said: "There may be public health implications of men...waiting longer to conceive." The doctor concluded that: "While the oldest father ever is 96, this research suggests that the risk to child and mother may increase if fathers conceive later."

Level 6

A study from Stanford University in the USA reports that babies of older fathers may be more likely to have health problems. Scientists studied data on 40,529,905 births in the USA between 2007 and 2016 to ascertain whether a father's age adversely affects his child's health. Researchers discovered that compared to babies born to fathers in the 25-to-34 age bracket, babies born to fathers over the age of 45 were at greater risk of being born with health problems. These included being born prematurely, having a low birth weight or being admitted to a neonatal intensive care unit. The researchers added that babies born to older fathers were generally not as healthy as those conceived by younger fathers.

One scientist said a lot more detailed research was needed to prove that older fathers conceive less-healthy babies. Dr Michael Eisenberg from the Stanford University School of Medicine said: "I think it's important to understand that the risks we are seeing are modest. So for an individual, the risk may not change much." He added that his team's data could show a trend that health departments in governments might want to be aware of. He said: "At a population level, there may be public health implications of men...waiting longer to conceive." Dr Eisenberg concluded that: "While the oldest father ever is 96, this research suggests that the risk to child and mother may increase if fathers conceive later."