

Will eating certain cereal result in male babies?

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Could eating cereal really make it more likely for someone to have a boy baby than a girl baby? Researchers wrote a paper, "Cereal-Induced Gender Selection? Most Likely a Multiple Testing False Positive," that will be published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* refuting such a notion.

Researchers S. Stanley Young, Ph.D., Assistant Director of the National Institute of Statistical Sciences, Heejung Bang, Ph.D., of Cornell University and Kutluk Oktay, MD, FACOG, Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Director, Division of Reproductive Medicine & Infertility Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology from New York Medical College, wrote a paper, "Cereal-Induced Gender Selection? Most Likely a Multiple Testing False Positive," which has been published in the January 14, 2009 online issue of the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*.

The paper questions the [claims made by Mathews, Johnson and Neil \(2008\) in their article "You are What your Mother Eats"](#) that was published in the April 22, 2008 *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, and generated over 50,000 Google hits due to media interest.

Young, Bang & Oktay note that the original research by Mathews, Johnson & Neil implied that children of women who eat breakfast cereal are more likely to be boys than girls. Young, Bang & Oktay assert that the result of the original study is easily explained as chance. Young, Bang & Oktay examined the data sets from the original study and noted

that 132 food items were tested for two time periods, totaling 264 statistical tests.

"This paper comes across as well-intended, but it is hard to believe that women can increase the likelihood of having a baby boy instead of a baby girl by eating more bananas, cereal or salt. Nominal statistical significance, unadjusted for multiple testing, is often used to lend plausibility to a research finding; with an arguably implausible result, it is essential that multiple testing be taken into account with transparent methods for claims to have any level of credibility," note Young, Bang & Oktay.

To read the current issue of the journal, go to:
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Source: National Institute of Statistical Sciences

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