

Men are the weaker sex

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This is Professor Marek Glezerman from Tel Aviv University. Credit: AFTAU

Nurses in the maternity ward often say that a difficult labor is a sign of a baby boy. Now, a Tel Aviv University study provides scientific proof that a male baby comes with a bigger package of associated risks than his female counterparts.

In a study of 66,000 births, Prof. Marek Glezerman, chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the Sackler School of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, together with Dr. Yariv Yogeve and Dr. Nir Melamed, found that while girls were at a higher risk for restricted

growth in utero and for breech presentation at birth, risks associated with boy fetuses were more abundant.

"Pregnancies with a male fetus are more often complicated," says Prof. Glezerman. "They're more likely to result in a premature rupture of the embryonic sac and suffer from premature delivery. And those male fetuses which make it to term," he continues, "are more likely to suffer from excessive growth in the uterus, making delivery more difficult and leading to more cesarian section deliveries."

Study Helps Doctors See the Bigger Picture

In a study presented to the Israel Society for Gender Based Medicine, researchers concluded that male fetuses come with "a higher association of risks," but note that the findings should be viewed in the proper light. "Boys are riskier to an extent," says Prof. Glezerman, but pregnancies involving boys should not be classified as "high-risk" for that reason alone. It's only one factor for doctors to consider when looking at the whole picture, he says.

"But in general, boys are more vulnerable in their life in utero, and this vulnerability continues to exist throughout their lives," says Prof. Glezerman, an expert in gender-based medicine. "Men are known to have a shorter lifespan, are more susceptible to infections, and have less chance of withstanding disease than women. In short, men are the weaker sex."

This new evidence, Prof. Glezerman notes, confirms the old wives' tale that boy fetuses are more troublesome in the womb and the delivery room. Prof. Glezerman also takes the notion one step further. "This research not only confirms an old wives' tale, but adds to what we know about the male gender. Males are also associated with higher risk in the neonatal period after birth, and are more likely to expose themselves to

risky behavior later in life."

Good Reasons for Associated Risks

Boys may take more risks as the result of peer pressure, and the presence of testosterone in a boy's bloodstream could also lead to more dangerous behavior. But this is not necessarily a bad thing, Prof. Glezerman believes. "Men become soldiers, construction workers, and work as firefighters," he notes. "They take on these risks quite naturally to protect their society, and they're trained to do this without question."

In Israel, Prof. Glezerman is chairman of the Helen Schneider Women's Hospital, and deputy director of the Rabin Medical Center, where the recent study was conducted. He also founded the Israeli Society for Gender Based Medicine and has done foundational work in support of a gender-based approach to medicine. Prof. Glezerman suggests that a new view of the role of gender in medicine is needed in all fields — internal medicine, gastroenterology, orthopedics, cardiology, and many others.

"It's almost like males and females are a different species," he says. "They complete and complement each other, but a 'one-size fits all' medical approach does an injustice to both males and females. Men and women are different in so many respects, and these differences are more significant than the similarities between them."

Source: Tel Aviv University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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