

Famine in early life linked to diabetes in later life, researchers find

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People born during three major 20th century famines were more likely to develop diabetes later in life than those not born during famines, according to a new study by SFI External Professor Stefan Thurner and collaborators.

Using a unique [dataset](#) of some 8 million Austrians—325,000 of whom were under treatment for diabetes in 2006 and 2007—the researchers studied the diabetes rates for patients from each birth year from 1917 to 2007.

Depending on the region, there was an up to two times greater chance of patients having diabetes when they were born during one of three [famines](#) in Austria compared to surrounding years. The excess risk for diabetes was nearly absent in those provinces of Austria that were less affected by the famines.

The significantly higher rates of diabetes for those born during periods of famine underscores the importance of ensuring sufficient nutrition in prenatal and early stages of life, the researchers say.

Thurner is a professor of [complex systems](#) at the Medical University of Vienna, Austria.

More information: Read the [paper](#) in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (March 4, 2013).

Provided by Santa Fe Institute

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