

Adolescents born premature report being just as happy and healthy as their peers

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Adolescents who were born extremely premature or extremely low birth weight report no differences in quality of life or self-esteem at age 18 compared with their term born peers, a study by Murdoch Childrens Research Institute has found.

Researchers followed up 194 premature and 148 term individuals born in Victoria in 1991 - 1992 when they turned 18 years old and assessed their self-reported quality of life, health status, self esteem and functional outcomes. Participants provided information about their general health, social and physical functioning, physical activity and risk-taking behaviours.

Researchers found [adolescents](#) who were born extremely premature or extremely low birth weight reported that their quality of life, health status and self-esteem was no different to the term adolescents. Within the preterm group, the most immature or tiniest survivors had similar quality of life, [health status](#) and self-esteem as their slightly more mature or heavier counterparts.

The study also showed the adolescents who were born premature reported undertaking less [physical activity](#) and were also less likely to engage in risky behaviours such as drinking alcohol, although rates of smoking were not different.

Lead researcher, Dr Gehan Roberts, said the results are important for families of [premature infants](#) who often ask about their children's future.

"These results should help to reassure parents and families that most extremely preterm children will report quality of life and functional outcomes similar to those of their term born peers, at late adolescence, despite higher rates of disability in earlier childhood."

"There was also no gradient in outcomes with either diminishing gestational age or [birth weight](#), meaning that even the most immature and smallest of survivors, who are now more numerous than ever before, reported similar experiences as their more mature and heavier peers."

Provided by Murdoch Childrens Research Institute

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