

Study shows extreme preemies must watch blood sugars and weight

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By the time they are in their early 30s, extremely low birth weight (ELBW) babies are four times more likely to develop dysglycemia, or abnormal blood glucose, than their normal birth weight (NBW) peers.

These [babies](#) who were born weighing less than 2.2 pounds are also more likely than their peer group to have higher body fat and lower lean mass in adulthood, although both groups have a similar body mass index (BMI), says research published in the journal *Pediatrics* today.

Now in their early '30s, 26 per cent of the ELBW babies have dysglycemia compared to 8 per cent of the NBW peers.

"Because they were born early, the ELBW babies were living outside the womb during the most important developmental period for fat and muscle development. We think that might be related to our findings," said Dr. Katherine Morrison, principal investigator of the study and an associate professor of [pediatrics](#) of McMaster's Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. She is also a pediatrician for Hamilton Health Sciences (HHS).

"It's important to know about these potential implications for the ELBW babies, so that we can identify ways to help those born premature counteract these potential influences on their health."

Researchers at McMaster University, led by pediatrics professor Dr. Saroj Saigal, have been following the health of extreme preemies since

their birth at HHS between 1977 and 1982.

"This is one of the largest and oldest longitudinal studies of extremely low [birth weight](#) children, but we are learning how that early start in life impacts them throughout their lives," said Morrison, who is also the co-director of the Metabolism and Childhood Research Program (MAC-Obesity) of McMaster and HHS.

"We very much appreciate the commitment of these study participants who have helped us with these studies throughout their lives."

Provided by McMaster University

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