

Preterm Birth Linked to Risk of Heart Failure



Researchers at Karolinska Institutet in Sweden report that babies that are born preterm have a higher risk of heart failure during childhood and adolescence as compared to those that are born full term. Findings are published in *The Journal of the American College of Cardiology*.

There is no doubt that a large number of babies survive preterm births. Babies that are born prematurely are exposed to the outside world at a time when their organs are not fully mature and when their bodies are not completely prepared for the transition from fetus to neonate.

Recently, scientists have been investigating the consequences of preterm birth on cardiovascular health in young adults. Previous studies suggest a higher risk of hypertension, stroke and fatal cardiovascular disease. Findings from this new study have now uncovered an unknown connection between preterm birth and heart failure in a registry study of 2.6 million individuals born between 1987 and 2012. They found that children born before the 28th week are 17 times more likely to suffer from heart failure as compared to children born full term. Children born between 28 to 31 weeks are three times more likely to suffer from heart failure. Children with birth defects were excluded in this analysis as well other determinants such as birth weight, socioeconomic condition and parental heart conditions.

Results from the study thus corroborate findings from previous studies that there is abnormal development of the cardiovascular system in people who are born prematurely.

"It could be the case that the higher risk of heart failure remains when they grow older, in which case more people will be affected as heart failure is much more common in older people," says associate professor Anna-Karin Edstedt Bonamy, paediatrician, who led the project. "In general the risk of heart failure can be reduced by adopting a healthy lifestyle, including refraining from tobacco use, keeping physically active, minimising your alcohol consumption and occasionally checking your blood pressure."

Source: [Karolinska Institutet](http://www.karolinska.se)

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