

# CHICAGO SUN-TIMES

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FOR BRYAN ANDERSON—THE BRAVEST MAN WE KNOW, SEE PAGE ONE

# Thanks, mom!

## Want to live to 100? Having a young mother helps

BY JIM RITTER  
Health Reporter

If your mother was young when you were born, you're more likely to live to a ripe old age, a University of Chicago study has found.

Children born before their mothers' 25th birthday were nearly twice as likely to live to 100, the study found. Husband-and-wife researchers Leonid Gavrilov and Natalia Gavrilova suggested two possible reasons:

- In monthly menstrual cycles, young women ovulate their best eggs first. As women age, their supply of top-quality eggs diminishes and they begin ovulating lower-quality eggs.

- Young women have fewer lifetime exposures to diseases and latent infections that could adversely affect their fetuses.

These days, many women put off children for education, careers and other reasons. Would it be better if they had children earlier?

"That's a politically charged question," Gavrilov said. "Our recommendation is to just think about it."

Jocelyn Jansen of Berwyn had her first child, Teresa, at age 24. "When I was young, my dream was to have children as soon as I got married," she said.

Jansen quit her job as a special education teacher to have kids. Now 28, she has three children under age 4

and is expecting a fourth. She was pleased to hear of the study's finding, but added, "I'm not surprised."

The researchers presented their study at a meeting in Dallas of the Gerontological Society of America. They work at NORC, a national research organization at the U. of C.

The researchers studied Census, Social Security and other records of 198 Americans who were born between 1890 and 1893 and lived to at least 100. For comparison purposes, these centenarians were compared with their siblings.

### Birth order not significant

Not everyone wants to live to 100, of course. But everyone wants to be healthy. And to live to 100, "you have to be healthy in your middle years," Gavrilov said.

Earlier studies found that first-born children are more likely to reach 100 than later-born siblings. But first-born children also tend to have younger mothers.

The new study suggests that the more significant factor is the age of the mother, not the birth order.

Gavrilov said he suspects that being a very young mother might not be good for a child's longevity. But, he added, the study was not large enough to determine the effect of having a teenaged mom.

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Jocelyn Jansen, 28, with her three daughters Teresa (from left), 3; Lucy, 1, and Cecilia ("Lolly"), 2. "When I was young, my dream was to have children as soon as I got married," said Jansen, who is expecting her fourth child. —DOM NAJOLIA/SUN-TIMES

