

Having children makes women live longer

7th December, 2012



A new report says that women who do not have children may die earlier than those who do. Researchers from Aarhus University in Denmark looked at over 21,000 couples between 1994 and 2005. They all tried to have children, without

success. The women all went to special clinics for IVF treatment – a technique where doctors fertilize the woman's egg in a laboratory. The researchers said that women who could not have children were four times likelier than mothers to die early. Some doctors have said the report might cause childless women to worry about dying early. The truth is there is a very small risk of an early death. Just 316 women died during the 11-year study. Very few of those died earlier than average.

One critic of the report said the study was very misleading. Dr Ingrid Collins, a psychologist, told the BBC: "This is a very specific situation of people who are trying to have children. The study's findings cannot be used to [talk about] the whole general population." She added: "People having IVF tend to be desperate for a child. If they are unsuccessful, they may be depressed. It may be this [depression] rather than the childlessness that [causes an earlier death]." Another psychologist, Dr Helen Nightingale, agreed, saying: "Being childless without a doubt reduces your fight for life...The support of a family, the focus on your children and grandchildren, and the desire to watch how they turn out drives your [will] to survive."

Sources: BBC News / WebMD.com

Writing

Children are the greatest things on Earth. Is this true? Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of having children.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

report / researchers / couples / special clinics / IVF / being childless / small risk / misleading / psychologist / population / desperate / depression / fight for life / desire

True / False

- A report says women who don't have children die young. T / F
- The report looked at 21,000 couples over an 11-year period. T / F
- IVF is where the human egg is fertilized outside the woman's body. T / F
- 316 women died at a younger age than usual in the researchers' study. T / F
- A doctor said the report might make women believe wrong information. T / F
- The doctor said the report was not about most women in society. T / F
- The doctor said depression causes childlessness. T / F
- Another doctor said children harm your will to live a long life. T / F

Synonym Match

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. earlier | a. confusing |
| 2. couples | b. in great need |
| 3. clinics | c. husbands / wives |
| 4. likelier | d. danger |
| 5. risk | e. desire |
| 6. misleading | f. before |
| 7. specific | g. sad |
| 8. desperate | h. medical centres |
| 9. depressed | i. particular |
| 10. will | j. more probable |

Discussion – Student A

- What did you think when you read the headline?
- What springs to mind when you hear the word 'children'?
- What do you think about what you read?
- Have you ever thought about the effect on health of not having a child?
- How many children is it best to have?
- Why do some people not want to have children?
- What is the best thing about having children?
- Do you worry about dying early?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|----------------------|
| 1. looked at over 21,000 | a. to worry |
| 2. fertilize | b. for a child |
| 3. the report might cause childless women | c. situation |
| 4. there is a very small risk | d. than average |
| 5. Very few of those died earlier | e. out |
| 6. This is a very specific | f. the woman's egg |
| 7. people who are trying | g. of an early death |
| 8. desperate | h. doubt |
| 9. without a | i. couples |
| 10. watch how they turn | j. to have children |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of people who always complain about other people's children?
- Are you good with children?
- Should children "be seen and not heard"?
- Which is best – having a boy or a girl?
- Do you think children are spoilt nowadays?
- How expensive is raising children?
- Would you like your children to be like you?
- Is it more fun to spend time with children or adults?

Spelling

- eacsererhrs from Aarhus University
- 21,000 pcelous
- special clinics for IVF ttneheart
- doctors eieiztrlf the woman's egg in a laboratory
- four times ieleirlk
- earlier than eeavgar
- the study was very nmdieisgla
- Ingrid Collins, a splictgsyhoo, told the BBC...
- the whole eegnalr population
- they may be sdesdeper
- without a todub
- drives your will to vurvsei

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. c	3. h	4. j	5. d
6. a	7. i	8. b	9. g	10. e

Role Play

Parent - You think children are the best things in the world. Tell the others three reasons why. You think children are the same as angels. If they do bad things, it isn't their fault but their parents. You think the best thing in the world is playing with children and teaching them to do things.

Childless person - You think children are far from the best things on Earth. Tell the others three reasons why. You think children should be seen and not heard. You are tired of noisy kids in restaurants, on trains, at airports, etc. You think there should be many childfree zones.

A kid - You think kids are the best things in the world. Tell the others three reasons why. You are tired of adults telling you what to do. You have the same rights as adults. Grown ups should give you more respect. They should let you play, run around screaming and climb on chairs.

Sociologist - You are worried that people are having fewer children today. The populating is getting older and we need more children. You are also worried about the behaviour of today's children. It is bad. The parents are responsible. You think all adults in society should help children grow up.

Speaking – Living Longer

What makes you want to live longer? Rank these and share your rankings with your partner. Put the best at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| • partner | • children and grandchildren |
| • hobbies | • desire to be 120 |
| • love of life | • fear of death |
| • money | • travel |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	T	c	T	d	F	e	T	f	T	g	F	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.