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Children of older dads pay IQ price

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UNLIKE women, men can continue having children into old age, but those kids may pay a small price - in intelligence.

Children born to older dads score lower on average on a range of tests, including concentration, memory, reasoning and reading, while the kids of older mothers score higher than those of younger mothers. That's according to [John McGrath](#) at the University of Queensland in St Lucia, Australia, and colleagues, who analysed data on more than 33,000 US children taken at 8 months and again at 4 years and 7 years (*PLoS Medicine*, DOI: [10.1371/journal.pmed.1000040](#)).

One might expect the offspring of older parents to benefit from good nurturing and better opportunities, leading to higher IQ, says McGrath. "That is exactly what we find for mothers - but exactly what we don't find for dads." The differences in test scores were small, however, amounting to 2 IQ points for the child of a 20-year-old father compared with that of a 50-year-old.

Accumulations of genetic errors in sperm-producing cells may explain these results, says McGrath, as well as findings of an increased risk of [schizophrenia](#), [autism](#) and bipolar disorder in the children of older dads.

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