

Premature infants and insulin resistance

One of the dramatic medical advances over the last 50 years has been the increasing survival of premature babies.

It's come at some cost, though, in terms of the intensive care and the treatment that's often required for multiple disabilities.

Now a New Zealand study has suggested another risk. They found that children born prematurely have higher chances of what's called insulin resistance. That's where insulin doesn't work as well at getting glucose inside cells and as a result can be the first step on the road to type 2 or adult onset diabetes.

It's known that children born with a low weight at full term have this problem but this study looked at children aged between 4 and 10 who were born before 32 weeks and either had an appropriate weight for their prematurity or a low birth weight.

Compared to normal children and controlled for factors which might have influenced the results, regardless of birth weight, prematurity was linked to lower insulin sensitivity.

That's the bad news. The good news is that if these findings are repeated by others then here's a group of kids who might merit some extra exercise and dietary advice to prevent adult diabetes.