# **Lower birthweight ups mortality in infants, adolescents**

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Babies born with a low birthweight are at an increased risk of death in infancy till adolescence compared to babies born at a normal birthweight, suggests new research led by an Indian-origin scientist.   
  
The findings showed that death rates were higher in babies with low birthweight at both age groups.   
  
Also, death occurred 130 times more frequently in those born at a very low birthweight (under 2,500g) than normal birth weight in infancy.

"This study is significant as it shows, for the first time, that low birthweight is associated with increased death rates from infancy right through to adolescence," said lead researcher Sailesh Kotecha, professor at Cardiff University in Britain.   
  
In the research, published in the journal PLOS Medicine, the team examined official death rates in very low birthweight and low birthweight babies among over 12 million births in England and Wales.   
  
Of the 12,355,251 live births between 1993 and 2011, there were 74,890 (0.61 percent) deaths between birth and 18 years of age, with 57,623 (77 percent) occurring in the first year of life and 17,267 (23 percent) occurring between one and 18 years of age.   
  
According to researchers, perinatal events and congenital malformations were the common causes of death in infancy.   
  
Further, conditions of the nervous system (20 percent) and respiratory system (16 percent) were found as the leading causes of death in the very low birthweight group.   
  
However, cancers and external conditions (including accidents) were seen as the primary causes of death in low birthweight groups.   
  
"The study reaffirms the need to tackle important factors such as maternal [smoking](http://www.speakingtree.in/topics/health/smoking) and deprivation which are well known to contribute to low birth weight," Kotecha added.   
  
"By understanding and ameliorating the influences of upstream exposures such maternal smoking and deprivation, later mortality can be decreased by reducing the delivery of vulnerable infants with low birth weight," the researchers concluded.