Parenting is GOOD for your health: Having kids could extend your life by TWO YEARS

By [GEOFF MAYNARD](http://www.express.co.uk/search?s=%20Geoff%20Maynard&b=1)

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HAVING kids may extend your life by as much as two years, new research suggests.

And the longevity benefits of fatherhood are even greater than those of motherhood with unmarried dads getting the best deal.

Scientists have found that parenthood prolongs life by keeping your faculties healthier for longer.

Researchers tracked the lifespan of 704,481 men and 725,290 women from the age of 60 onwards.

The study, which ran until the end of 2014, also gathered data on whether the participants were married, how many children they had and whether they had boys or girls.

The researchers took several factors into account, such as education levels.

But the results showed the risks of death was lower among those who had at least one child, compared to those who were childless.

This was particularly true for men who became fathers.

The risk of death in the next year for an 80-year-old dad was 7.4 per cent, compared to a 8.3 per cent risk for a childless man of the same age.

The gap in absolute death risks between the two groups rose with increasing age, and was somewhat larger for men than it was for women.

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At the age of 60, the difference in the one year risk of death was 0.06 per cent among men and 0.16 per cent among women.

But by the age of 90, these difference had risen to 1.47 per cent among men and 1.1 per cent among women.

And you don’t have to be married as the trend was evident among both unmarried and married participants with unmarried men doing best.

The difference in death risk was 1.2 per cent in unmarried men, compared to 0.6 per cent among those who were married.

It could be because unmarried men rely more on their children but the study found they are also likely to be less well educated, whereas the opposite is true of women.

But while many imagine it is daughters who dote on their parents in their twilight years, the study suggested the sex of children did not play a role.

This could mean that sons are just as likely to support their parents and help navigate the health system for them in their later years.

The researchers stressed that the study, published in the Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health. is only observational, so no firm conclusions about cause and effect can be drawn.

Study author Dr Karin Modig (COR), from the Institute of Environmental Medicine, Sweden, said: “Our finding that the association grew stronger when parents became older is further in agreement with research suggesting that childless people face support deficits only towards the end of life.”