Today’s piece was prepared by Susan Glass, MD, based on a NY Times article [Good News for Older Mothers](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/03/well/family/good-news-for-the-older-mothers.html)

This article describes a 2016 study examining 3 groups of British children born in 1958, 1970, and 2000-2, with follow-up cognitive testing at 10 years of age. The study found that children born in 1958 and 1970 to mothers aged 35-39 tended to score lower on cognitive testing than those born to mothers aged 25-29. However, the trend reversed in 2000-2; children born to older mothers did better on cognitive tests than those born to younger mothers. The article emphasizes that the relationship between maternal age and children’s cognitive testing is purely associative. When researchers controlled for maternal social and economic factors, the reversal was no longer observed. While 50-60 years ago older mothers tended to be socioeconomically disadvantaged and to have already had many children, older mothers now tend to be more educated and more socioeconomically advantaged. The article quotes the study’s lead author’s clarification that the study does not address the question of whether mothers’ waiting to have children will benefit their children’s cognitive development. The author states that compared to younger mothers, older mothers now tend to take better care of themselves during pregnancy, are less likely to smoke, and are more likely to breastfeed. However, it is unclear whether these maternal characteristics were in fact significantly different between groups, or whether this was simply the author’s intuitive explanation.

Although this article does clarify that deciding to wait to have children will not necessarily improve children’s cognitive development, I found the title and introduction to the article to be misleading. The study is not good news for older mothers, but is in fact a reflection of the long-term effects of social and economic inequality on children’s development. However, the article (and perhaps the paper) goes into very little detail on which specific maternal characteristics might contribute to these effects and is therefore of limited value to readers.

**RESOURCES ON COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT**[Kinsteps](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cszinne%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CTemporary%20Internet%20Files%5CContent.Outlook%5CCY71R33Y%5CKinsteps) *Sends text messages to reinforce language-rich communication, which is beneficial for children’s cognitive development.*
[Get Ready to Read](http://www.getreadytoread.org/) *Aids in preparing for early literacy, another important milestone in cognitive development.*
[Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs](http://www.amchp.org/AboutAMCHP/Pages/default.aspx) *Resources for maternal health*
[Parent-Child Home Program](http://www.parent-child.org/) *Home visits and resources for socioeconomically disadvantaged families.*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!