

Could your birthday predict your fate?

Your month of birth could influence your lifespan, mental health and even your eyesight.

With my birthday in the first week of October, my horoscope tells me that I should be fair-minded and balanced, courageous but indecisive. Needless to say, scientific studies have long **debunked** such predictions.

Over the last few years, however, scientists have begun to notice that the month of your birth really can predict your fate. The most obvious effects concern school grades – children born at the end of the school year perform slightly worse than those born in the beginning, although the differences tend to **peter out** over the years. But there are other, more startling, patterns that are not so easily explained.

In the late 90s, for instance, an American scientist found that people born in the autumn tend to live longer. He has since confirmed the discovery with many different studies and, looking at centenarians, his latest paper found that autumn babies are about 40% more likely to live to a hundred than people born in March.

Others traits influenced by your birth season appear to be your eyesight (winter babies are the least likely to be highly short-sighted) and your risk of allergies (people born in the summer are less susceptible).

Admittedly, the mechanisms behind these trends are unclear. Changes in diet and yearly waves of infection could influence the growth of a developing baby, with a possible effect on its health for decades afterwards. Alternatively, it could be as simple as the length of the day. When it comes to eyesight, for instance, studies have shown that periods of darkness help to regulate the growth of the eyeball. So while a summer baby's eyes might grow out of shape and lose their focus due to the long summer days, a winter baby is less likely to need glasses as he or she grows up.

Word count: 317

Source: BBC Website – David Robson - 21 August 2014 <http://www.bbc.com/future/story/20140820-the-hidden-truth-of-star-signs>

Additional Vocabulary (pour départager les ex-aequo éventuels):

apprenticeship – thoroughly – disobedient – dessert – correspondence