

# Study shows why women cope better than men

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University of Chicago scientists say female rats handle stress better than males, which suggests why women better survive social isolation than men.

Researchers used 120 rats in the experiment that documented the long-lasting effects of three months of isolation followed by one 30-minute episode of acute physical stress had on the function of the rodents' immune systems, The Chicago Tribune reported Monday.

The researchers measured the rats' inflammatory response -- the body's initial reaction to bacteria, viruses and other invaders.

Just two or three weeks after being subjected to the isolation and subsequent acute physical stress, male rats showed a markedly slower inflammatory response than females when injected with a foreign body, the scientists said, noting the female rats' responses were "staggeringly stronger."

Senior author Martha McClintock, a psychology professor and director of the university's Institute for Mind and Biology, said the difference in responses may be related to the demands of motherhood, in which mothers react faster to stress and injury in order to better protect their young.

McClintock and co-author Gretchen Hermes detail the study in the American Journal of Physiology -- Regulatory, Integrative and

Comparative Physiology, a publication of the American Physiological Society.

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