

# Can dad's bacteria trigger an early birth?

**A microbiological researcher from the University of Western Australia has received funding to explore how the outcomes for preterm babies might be improved.**

UWA Medical School obstetrics and gynaecology principal research fellow Associate Professor Matt Payne is the recipient of a Stan Perron Charitable Foundation's 2024 health researcher grant.

"Preterm birth remains the leading cause of death and disability in children less than five years of age worldwide," Prof. Payne said.

"It impacts approximately



*Associate Professor Matt Payne*

eight per cent of Australian infants and is twice as common in First Nations women."

Prof. Payne studies bacterial DNA in the vagina and how it can affect pregnancy.

He will use the funding in two

ways: To document the vaginal microbiome in First Nations women to develop tests which can predict a preterm birth; and to explore how microbes might cause preterm births.

He will also explore the role of the father's genital microbiome in preterm birth and whether new treatments should include both male and female for the best pregnancy outcomes.

"I am incredibly grateful to the Stan Perron Charitable Foundation for their support of this work, which expands on how certain combinations of vaginal microbes can predict preterm birth," he said.