

Teenagers from low income families at greater risk of migraine

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Teenagers from low income households with no family history of migraine are more likely to suffer migraine than children from upper income families, according to a study published in the July 3, 2007, issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

For the study, researchers surveyed 18,714 adolescents and their parents. A total of 1,178 adolescents had migraine.

In households with an annual income lower than \$22,500, the rate of migraine in teens without a parental history of migraine was 4.4 percent. In families earning \$90,000 or more, the rate was 2.9 percent.

“Possible factors associated with low socioeconomic status, such as stress, poor diet or limited access to medical care may be responsible for this increase,” said study author Marcelo E. Bigal, MD, PhD, with Albert Einstein College of Medicine in Bronx, NY. “We plan to further investigate the role of nutrition, stress and treatment patterns since migraine may interfere with education, making it a public health concern.”

In families with a history of migraine, the rate of migraine among adolescents was nearly the same between both income groups. “It’s possible that in those with family history of migraine, the biological predisposition dominates and household income does not have a strong effect,” said Bigal.

The study found that overall 6.3 percent of teens experience migraine per year, with more girls than boys and more Caucasians than African Americans experiencing migraine. The study also found most teenagers have one to four migraine attacks per month and most are severely impaired or require bedrest.

Bigal says the study is consistent with past studies which have found a strong relationship between migraine and low income in adults, but there are limitations. “Psychiatric factors, such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse, were not measured in this study. It may be that these factors could explain the association between migraine and low income, which is why we need to better explore these factors,” said Bigal.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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