

High blood pressure pill cuts risk of Parkinson's disease

February 6 2008

People taking a widely used group of drugs known as calcium channel blockers to treat high blood pressure also appear to be cutting their risk of Parkinson's disease, according to a study published in the February 6, 2008, online issue of *Neurology*.

The study involved 7,374 men and women over age 40. Half of the group had Parkinson's disease; the other half did not have Parkinson's disease. Among both groups, nearly half used high blood pressure medications, such as calcium channel blockers, ACE inhibitors, AT II antagonists and beta blockers.

The study found people who were currently long-term users of calcium channel blockers to treat high blood pressure lowered their risk of Parkinson's disease by 23 percent compared to people who didn't take the drugs. There was no such effect among people taking ACE inhibitors, AT II antagonists and beta blockers.

"Long-term use of calcium channel blockers was associated with a reduced risk of developing Parkinson's disease while no such association was seen for other high blood pressure medicines," said study author Christoph R. Meier, PhD, MSc, with University Hospital Basel in Switzerland.

Meier says more research is needed to determine why calcium channel blockers appear to protect against Parkinson's disease, whether this is indeed a causal association, and why the other high blood pressure

medications do not offer a reduced risk.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

Citation: High blood pressure pill cuts risk of Parkinson's disease (2008, February 6) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-02-high-blood-pressure-pill-parkinson.html>

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