

High cholesterol in your 40s increases risk of Alzheimer's disease

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People with high cholesterol in their early 40s are more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those with low cholesterol, according to research that will be presented at the upcoming American Academy of Neurology 60th Anniversary Annual Meeting in Chicago, April 12–19, 2008.

"Our findings show it would be best for both physicians and patients to attack high cholesterol levels in their 40s to reduce the risk of dementia," said study author Alina Solomon, MD, with the University of Kuopio in Finland. Solomon collaborated with Rachel Whitmer, PhD, senior author of the study and a research scientist with Kaiser Permanente Division of Research in Oakland, CA.

The study involved 9,752 men and women in northern California who underwent health evaluations between 1964 and 1973 when they were between the ages of 40 and 45 and remained with the same health plan through 1994. From 1994 to 2007, researchers obtained the participants' most recent medical records to find 504 people had a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease and 162 had vascular dementia.

The study found people with total cholesterol levels between 249 and 500 milligrams were one-and-a-half times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease than those people with cholesterol levels of less than 198 milligrams. People with total cholesterol levels of 221 to 248 milligrams were more than one-and-a-quarter times more likely to develop Alzheimer's disease.

"High mid-life cholesterol increased the risk of Alzheimer's disease regardless of midlife diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, smoking and late-life stroke," said Solomon.

Solomon says conclusions regarding high mid-life cholesterol and the risk of vascular dementia were difficult to formulate as there are several types of vascular dementia that may have slightly different risk factors.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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