

# Does gene show link between migraine and stroke or heart attacks?

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New research looks at whether a gene variant may affect the link between migraine and stroke or heart attacks. The study is published in the February 17, 2009, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The study involved 25,000 women who answered a questionnaire about their history of migraines and migraines with aura. Aura is usually described as visual disturbances, such as flashing lights or geometric patterns. The women were tested for a genetic variant called the angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) D/I polymorphism.

A total of 4,577 women reported a history of migraine and of those, 1,275 had migraine with aura. Twelve years after the start of the study, 625 strokes and heart attacks were reported.

The study did not find a link between the gene variant and migraine, migraine with aura, stroke or heart attacks. However, women who had migraine with aura and also were carriers of certain genotypes, called the DD and the DI genotypes, had double the risk of stroke and heart attacks. In contrast, women who had migraine with aura and were carriers of a third genotype, called the II genotype, were not at increased risk. The authors add the caution that this relationship was identified with very little information and must be tested in other studies to determine if it is real.

"The complex relationship among this gene variant, migraine, stroke and

heart disease has been the focus of many studies and the results have been controversial," says study author Markus Schürks, MD, MSc, with the Division of Preventive Medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston. "Getting to the bottom of whether there is a connection and why may help to develop ways to prevent issues like stroke and heart disease, which are leading causes of death in the United States."

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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