

Fat around the middle increases the risk of dementia

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Women who store fat on their waist in middle age are more than twice as likely to develop dementia when they get older, reveals a new study from the Sahlgrenska Academy.

The study has just been published in the scientific journal *Neurology*.

"Anyone carrying a lot of fat around the middle is at greater risk of dying prematurely due to a heart attack or [stroke](#)," says Deborah Gustafson, senior lecturer at the Sahlgrenska Academy, Sweden. "If they nevertheless manage to live beyond 70, they run a greater risk of [dementia](#)."

The research is based on the Prospective Population Study of [Women](#) in Gothenburg, which was started at the end of the 1960s when almost 1,500 women between the ages of 38 and 60 underwent comprehensive examinations and answered questions about their health and lifestyle.

A follow-up 32 years later showed that 161 women had developed dementia, with the average age of diagnosis being 75. This study shows that women who were broader around the waist than the hips in middle age ran slightly more than twice the risk of developing dementia when they got old. However, the researchers could find no link to a high [body mass index](#) (BMI).

"Other studies have shown that a high BMI is also linked to dementia, but this was not the case in ours," says Gustafson. "This may be because

obesity and overweight were relatively unusual among the women who took part in the Prospective Population Study."

More information: *Neurology*. 10 Nov 2009; 73: 1559-1566.

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