

Early menopause can result in earlier onset dementia

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Women experiencing an early onset of menopause could develop dementia at a younger age. Research by Tonnie Coppus of Erasmus MC has indicated this. She studied women with Down Syndrome, who are known to have an early onset of menopause. The results of her research can be translated to apply to the general population. Her results will be published in the *Journal of Alzheimer Disease* today.

Women with [Down Syndrome](#) have an earlier onset of [menopause](#) compared to women in the general population, 44 years of age and 52 years of age, respectively. Coppus' findings show a strong relationship between the age of menopause onset and the age at which [dementia](#) is diagnosed. Coppus: "Women with Down Syndrome with an early onset of menopause also appear to suffer from dementia at an early age. In addition, my study shows that these women also die younger."

Alzheimer's disease is the major cause of illness and death among people with Down Syndrome. The Epidemiology department of Erasmus MC has been studying more than 500 people with Down Syndrome, above the age of 45, since 2000. In particular, the factors affecting the onset of dementia and death are studied. The health development found within this group is in fact an accelerated version of the developments found in the general population. The research results can therefore be translated to similar results for the general population.

A first step in the development of Alzheimer is the build up of so-called amyloid in the [brain](#). The deposition of this amyloid occurs under

influence of a certain gene, higher levels of which are found in people with Down Syndrome. Down Syndrome is a [chromosomal disorder](#) in which there are three copies of chromosome 21. This chromosome has various [genes](#) that play a role in neurological diseases. The most important of these is the gene that is responsible for the production of the [protein amyloid](#). Coppus: "Studying the various factors that influence the development of Alzheimer's disease among people with Down Syndrome also improves our understanding of the role of amyloid in the development of Alzheimer's disease within the general population."

As it appears, not only can a relationship with the age of onset of dementia be determined but also a relationship between early onset of menopause and dying young. Coppus: "As dementia itself also leads to a reduced life expectancy, I made calculations in which I corrected the results of the effect of dementia on death. Despite this, the relationship between early menopause onset and dying young remains. The research results provide substantial information on the relationship between menopause and dementia and the relationship between menopause and death."

More information: www.j-alz.com

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