

# Exposure to common germs linked to worse cognition

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(HealthDay)—Infectious burden, a composite serologic measure of exposure to common pathogens, is associated with worse cognition, according to a study published in the March 26 issue of *Neurology*.

Noting that previous research has shown that infectious burden is associated with vascular risk, Mira Katan, M.D., from the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City, and colleagues examined its potential link with cognition. The Mini-Mental State Examination (MMSE) and modified Telephone Interview for [Cognitive Status](#) were used to assess cognition annually for 1,625 participants in the Northern Manhattan Study cohort.

In unadjusted analyses, the researchers found that a higher infectious burden index correlated with worse cognition. After adjustment for risk factors, these effects were attenuated, but were still significant. Infectious burden correlated with an increased likelihood of lower MMSE scores. There was no association for infectious burden with [cognitive decline](#) over time. Limiting infectious burden to viral serologies only produced similar results.

"Our results extend the findings of previous studies aimed at investigating the association of [chronic infections](#) and [cognitive performance](#) and specifically point to infectious burden as a common risk factor of both stroke and cognitive impairment," the authors write.

Several authors disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical and medical technology industries. Two authors have provided legal opinions for law firms and pharmaceutical companies.

**More information:** [Abstract](#)

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