

# Head, neck injuries may increase stroke risk among trauma patients younger than 50

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Suffering an injury to the head or neck increases ischemic stroke risk three-fold among trauma patients younger than 50, according to research presented at the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference 2014.

"These findings are important because strokes after [trauma](#) might be preventable," said Christine Fox, M.D., M.A.S., lead author and assistant professor of neurology at the University of California San Francisco.

Researchers studied the health records of 1.3 million patients younger than 50 years who had been treated in emergency trauma rooms. About 11 of every 100,000 patients (145) suffered a [stroke](#) within four weeks. Since 2 million patients are seen in U.S. trauma rooms each month, this suggests 214 young people a month have an [ischemic stroke](#) after a trauma.

Researchers also noted that:

- About 48 in 100,000 young adults and 11 of 100,000 children who had a head or neck injury had a stroke.
- Patients with stroke were an average 37 years old, while those who didn't have a stroke were an average 24.

One cause of stroke after trauma is a tear in the head or neck blood vessels that lead to the brain, which can be a source of blood clots that cause a stroke. If a tear in these arteries can be diagnosed at the time of

the trauma, a patient could be treated with an anti-clotting medicine to help prevent stroke. In the study, 10 percent of the people who had a stroke were diagnosed with this kind of tear, but not all the patients were diagnosed with it prior to stroke.

The incidence rate of stroke among [trauma patients](#) found in this study was determined using a fairly broad definition of trauma. One of the next steps in the study will be to measure [stroke incidence](#) after different types of trauma (such as car collisions) and injuries (such as vertebral fractures) in order to determine who might be at higher [stroke risk](#), Fox said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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