

# Anxiety moderates amyloid-beta association with cognition

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(HealthDay)—For older adults, elevated amyloid- $\beta$  ( $A\beta$ ) levels correlate with cognitive decline, and elevated anxiety moderates these associations, according to a study published online Jan. 28 in *JAMA Psychiatry*.

Robert H. Pietrzak, Ph.D., from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in West Haven, Conn., and colleagues examined the correlation between  $A\beta$  status and cognitive changes in a multicenter, prospective study. Three hundred thirty-three healthy, [older adults](#) underwent assessments at baseline and at 18, 36, and 54 months.

The researchers found that positive  $A\beta$  ( $A\beta+$ ) status at baseline correlated with a significant reduction in global cognition, [verbal memory](#), language, and executive function; these correlations were moderated by elevated anxiety symptoms. Slopes of cognitive decline

were significantly more pronounced in the A $\beta$ + high-anxiety group than in the A $\beta$ + low-anxiety group, with Cohen *d* values of 0.78, 0.54, 0.51, and 0.39 for global cognition, verbal memory, language, and [executive function](#), respectively. The effects were independent of confounding variables such as age, educational level, *APOE* genotype, subjective memory complaints, and depressive symptoms. The correlation between A $\beta$  and [cognitive decline](#) was not moderated by [depressive symptoms](#) or subjective memory complaints.

"Given that there is currently no standard antiamyloid therapy and that anxiety symptoms are amenable to treatment, these findings may help inform risk stratification and management of the preclinical phase of Alzheimer's disease," the authors write.

Two authors disclosed financial ties to Cogstate Ltd., which provided some of the cognitive tests used in this study and contributed funding to the study.

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