

# Chronic diseases may increase risk of dementia

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In a new study of older adults, having multiple chronic conditions was linked with an increased risk of mild cognitive impairment (MCI) or dementia.

Investigators assessed 2176 cognitively normal participants who were an average age of 78.5 years and were followed for a median of 4 years. Participants with more than 1 chronic condition were 38% more likely to develop MCI/[dementia](#). Participants with 4 or more conditions had a 61% increased risk compared with those with 0 or 1 condition. Men also had a higher risk than women.

The findings suggest that preventing chronic diseases may help aging adults maintain their mental health.

"We were not able to investigate the specific mechanisms by which multimorbidity contributes to cognitive impairment; however our findings are consistent with the hypothesis that multiple etiologies may contribute to late-life cognitive decline and thus emphasize the importance of prevention," said Dr. Rosebud Roberts, senior author of the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* study. "They also emphasize that chronic diseases, once diagnosed, should be efficiently managed."

**More information:** J Am Geriatr Soc 63:1783–1790, 2015

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