

# New genetic risk marker for late-life depression

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One of the most powerful predictors in neuropsychiatry is the epsilon 4 ( $\epsilon 4$ ) allele of the apolipoprotein gene (APOE).

Individuals who carry this  $\epsilon 4$  variant of APOE are at increased risk for developing Alzheimer's disease, early age of Alzheimer's disease onset, and more rapid progression of Alzheimer's disease symptoms. APOE  $\epsilon 4$  has also been associated with atherosclerosis as well as cardiovascular and [cerebrovascular disease](#).

A new study published in the current issue of *Biological Psychiatry* suggests that even when controlling for the risk for Alzheimer's disease, the APOE  $\epsilon 4$  allele also conveys an increased risk for late-life [depression](#).

In this study, researchers examined the relationship between APOE  $\epsilon 4$  and depression in a large population-based sample of 839 older Swedish adults followed over 5 years.

"In our study, the presence of the APOE  $\epsilon 4$  predicted future depression, even after excluding individuals who later developed [dementia](#)," explained corresponding author Dr. Silke Kern at the University of Gothenburg. "It was also related to dementia. APOE  $\epsilon 4$  might be a marker for identifying older persons at risk to develop depression or dementia, which could be important for prevention and early detection of these common disorders."

"Late-life depression is an under-appreciated source of distress and disability in older people," said Dr. John Krystal, Editor of Biological Psychiatry. "The current study suggests a new link to the biology of Alzheimer's disease, even among people who do not show signs of memory impairment."

**More information:** Ingmar Skoog et al. A 9-Year Prospective Population-Based Study on the Association Between the APOE\*E4 Allele and Late-Life Depression in Sweden, *Biological Psychiatry* (2015). [DOI: 10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.01.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.01.006)

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