

New study links hot flashes with depression

June 26 2017



Credit: George Hodan/Public Domain

With age comes a greater risk of depression, especially in women. With 15% of the female population in the US being 65 or older, and the number expected to double in the next 50 years, there is a major focus on age-related disorders, including depression. A new study published in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS), documents an association between hot flashes and a greater risk of depression.

Although previous studies have shown an association between [hot flashes](#) and [depressive symptoms](#), this new study specifically looked at the impact of hot flashes, along with a number of other independent factors, on the risk of depression in women 65 or older. The study results included in the article titled "Vasomotor symptoms are associated with depressive symptoms in community-dwelling old women" were based on an analysis of more than 1,500 Australian women aged 65 to 79 years.

Among other findings, the study documented that a number of risk factors are independently associated with moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms, including persistent hot flashes. Other factors included living in financially insecure housing, serving as a caregiver to another person, being a smoker, having pelvic floor dysfunction, or experiencing [vaginal dryness](#) during intercourse. Women with partners and those employed were less susceptible to depression. Of no surprise was the fact that moderate-to-severe depressive symptoms were more common among women using antidepressants compared with nonusers.

"Older women need to be assessed for depression, particularly if they have housing issues or caregiving responsibilities and complain of hot flashes, vaginal dryness, or [pelvic floor](#) issues," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director.

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

Citation: New study links hot flashes with depression (2017, June 26) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-links-hot-depression.html>

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