

# Can pain increase the risk of dying early?

June 7 2017

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Pain that interferes with daily life, rather than pain per se, was associated with an increased risk of early death in a recent analysis.

Individuals who were often troubled with pain had a 29% increased risk of dying during the study, and those who reported "quite a bit" and "extreme" pain interference had 38% and 88% increased risks, respectively. Report of any pain or having widespread pain was not associated with an increased risk of mortality.

The study population was drawn from two large population cohorts of adults aged  $\geq$ 50 years; the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, with 6324 participants, and the North Staffordshire Osteoarthritis Project, with 10,985 participants.

Additional studies are needed to determine the mechanisms through which disabling pain may increase the risk of [premature death](#).

"There is much debate about whether people with persistent pain die prematurely and why this might happen. Our study sheds new light by showing that it is not the pain itself that increases the risk of death but the amount of disruption of everyday living linked to having long-term pain," said Dr. Ross Wilkie co-author of the *Arthritis Care & Research* study. "The implication is that society must find ways to help people with long-term pain to live life to the full at work, at home, and in the community."

**More information:** Diane Smith et al, Pain and mortality in older

adults: The influence of pain phenotype, *Arthritis Care & Research* (2017). [DOI: 10.1002/acr.23268](https://doi.org/10.1002/acr.23268)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Can pain increase the risk of dying early? (2017, June 7) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-pain-dying-early.html>

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