

Being unmarried or widowed linked to increased dementia risk

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Researchers from University College London have found that people who are single or widowed are at a greater risk of dementia than people who are married. The research, which is a review of 14 existing studies,

is being presented today (17 July) at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference (AAIC17) in London.

Dr Laura Phipps of Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

"There is compelling research showing married [people](#) generally live longer and enjoy better health, with many different factors likely to be contributing to that link. People who are married tend to be financially better off, a factor that is closely interwoven with many aspects of our health. Spouses may help to encourage healthy habits, look out for their partner's [health](#) and provide important social support.

"Research suggests that social interaction can help to build cognitive reserve – a mental resilience that allows people to function for longer with a disease like Alzheimer's before showing symptoms. While people who are unmarried or widowed may have fewer opportunities for social engagement as they age, this certainly isn't always the case. This [research](#) points to differences in levels of physical activity and education underlying much of the differences in [dementia](#) risk between single, married and widowed people. Staying physically, mentally, and socially active are all important aspects of a healthy lifestyle and these are things everyone, regardless of their marital status, can work towards. It's important to remember that this study is taking a population-level view, and age, genetic and lifestyle factors will all play a role in defining someone's risk of dementia at an individual level."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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