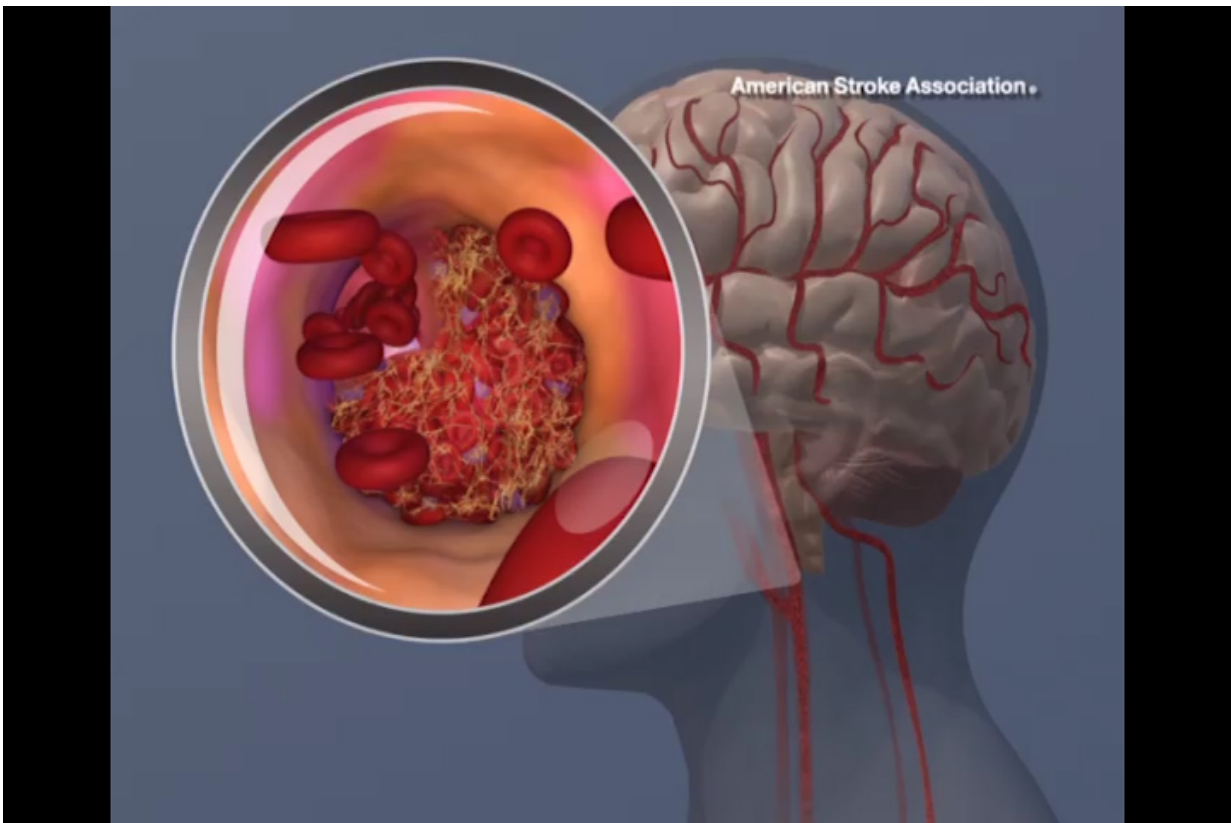


Self-silencing may lead to increased risk of stroke

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A blood clot forming in the carotid artery. Credit: American Heart Association

Expressing your true feelings is not only good for your mental health, but it could also be important for your physical health. A new study associates self-silencing (inhibiting one's self-expression) with greater

carotid plaque buildup which could lead to a stroke and other cardiovascular problems. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Chicago, September 25 to 28, 2019.

Individuals engage in a range of behaviors to maintain [close relationships](#), some of which may be costly to their own health. One such behavior is self-silencing, which is sometimes used to avoid conflict or relationship loss. Although self-silencing has been linked to worse mental and self-reported [physical health](#) in women, it has not been previously examined in relation to women's cardiovascular health.

In this new study of 304 perimenopausal and postmenopausal nonsmoking women, researchers tested whether self-silencing was associated with carotid atherosclerosis. They found that greater self-silencing was related to increased odds of plaque independent of socio-demographics, CVD risk factors, and depression. The results were based on women's self-reporting on a range of factors such as how often they expressed anger or put someone else's needs before their own. Ultrasound imaging was used to quantify carotid plaque.

"Given increased public health interest in women's experiences in [intimate relationships](#), our results suggest that [women's](#) socio-emotional expression may be relevant to their cardiovascular health," says Karen Jakubowski, Ph.D., lead author of the study, from the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh.

"Studies like this one are valuable as they highlight the importance of understanding how a woman's emotional disposition can affect her physical health," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director. "These results should encourage healthcare providers to take into consideration socio-emotional factors when outlining a preventive care plan for their patients."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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