

Research shows blood pressure lowering reduces risk of developing dementia

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Research completed in NUI Galway has shown that lowering blood pressure by taking blood pressure medications reduces the risk of developing dementia and cognitive impairment by 7%. The findings are

published today in a leading international medical journal, the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*.

Fourteen randomised controlled trials (96,158 participants) were included in this systematic review and meta-analysis. Blood pressure lowering with antihypertensive medications reduced the risk of developing dementia or [cognitive impairment](#) by 7%, and cognitive decline also by 7% over a four-year period.

"When you consider how common dementia is in the population (50 million people worldwide), [effective treatment](#) and control of hypertension would have a major impact on preventing dementia. Our findings emphasize the need for more effective screening, prevention, and [treatment of hypertension](#), which remains suboptimal in Ireland," explains Dr. Conor Judge, joint first author and Wellcome Trust Health Research Board Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) fellow.

Dr. Judge continued: "We know from The Irish Longitudinal Study on Aging that two thirds of people aged over 50 in Ireland have hypertension (high [blood pressure](#)), of which half are unaware of the diagnosis, and one third are not on treatment. This is a major care gap."

This study aimed to gather all the evidence from previous trials of blood pressure lowering medications and estimate how much the risk of dementia can be reduced by taking blood pressure lowering medications in people who are diagnosed with [high blood pressure](#). Blood pressure lowering reduces the risk of stroke and heart disease. Prevention of dementia can now be added to the benefits of treating hypertension. Importantly, there are no available therapies that directly prevent dementia, so this study highlights the critical importance of blood pressure in the risk of dementia.

Dr. Michelle Canavan, Consultant Geriatrician at Galway University

Hospital, and senior author of the paper, commented: "Prevention of dementia is a major health priority. We know from previous research that a major concern of older people is developing dementia. The message from this study is simple: Get your blood pressure checked. If it is high, it can be readily treated with lifestyle changes and medications. We would hope that our study will heighten awareness of the importance of controlling [blood](#) pressure to maintain "brain" health, combined with a healthy lifestyle."

Provided by National University of Ireland Galway

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