

Hot flashes, yet another early indicator for Alzheimer's disease

September 27 2023



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As if hot flashes alone weren't bad enough for women going through the menopause transition, a new study suggests that, especially when they occur during sleep, hot flashes may be early indicators of a woman's

increased risk for Alzheimer's disease (AD). And, the more hot flashes, the greater the disease risk.

The study results presented at the [2023 Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society](#) in Philadelphia September 27–30 are part of a presentation entitled "Menopausal Vasomotor Symptoms and Plasma Alzheimer's Disease Biomarkers."

Women comprise two-thirds of individuals with AD, and there are a number of theories as to why this is true, with many focused on decreased estrogen levels that occur during the [menopause transition](#). Prior research has linked one of the most common symptoms of [menopause](#)—[hot flashes](#)—with poor memory performance and with alterations in brain structure, function, and connectivity. However, it is unknown whether hot flashes are associated with AD biomarkers.

Recent advances in assessing AD include the development of AD blood-based biomarkers, which have proven especially useful for assessing risk decades before the emergence of AD dementia. These biomarkers were used as part of a new study involving nearly 250 midlife women. The objective of the study was to determine whether objectively assessed hot flashes are associated with adverse AD biomarker profiles.

Dr. Rebecca Thurston, Director of Women's Biobehavioral Health at the University of Pittsburgh Department of Psychiatry, and Dr. Pauline Maki, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois at Chicago, led the study.

Based on the results of the study, Drs. Thurston, Maki, and their team concluded that hot flashes experienced during sleep may be a marker of women at risk of AD dementia. Further, a greater number of sleep hot flashes were associated with an increased likelihood of AD. These findings remained significant after additional adjustments for estradiol

and actigraphy-assessed sleep characteristics. Hot flashes were measured objectively by using ambulatory skin conductance monitoring.

"Among other things, these findings indicate that [women](#) who experience frequent hot flashes, particularly during sleep, may warrant AD dementia risk reduction efforts," says Dr. Thurston.

"Given the adverse effect on quality of life and financial burden of AD, it's important that we learn as much as possible about potential causes and warning signs so we can be proactive before the onset of AD," adds Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director of The Menopause Society.

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

Citation: Hot flashes, yet another early indicator for Alzheimer's disease (2023, September 27) retrieved 27 April 2024 from

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