

# ADHD medication linked to reduced mortality

March 12 2024

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Researchers from Karolinska Institutet have shown a link between use of medication for ADHD and a reduced risk of premature death. The risk of death due to unnatural causes, such as accidents and overdoses, can be reduced by a quarter, according to the new study [published](#) in *JAMA*.

Previous research has shown that people diagnosed with ADHD have an increased risk of premature [death](#). However, it is not clear whether medications for ADHD affect this risk.

A registry study followed nearly 150,000 Swedes aged 6-64, who were diagnosed with ADHD between 2007 and 2018. The researchers investigated the risk of death up to two years after diagnosis and compared those who started medication within three months of diagnosis (56.7 percent) with those who did not.

"The study showed that there is a link between initiation of medication and a lower risk of death. This was true regardless of the cause of death, but the risk of dying from unnatural causes, such as alcohol and [drug overdose](#), decreased the most. The association was not as strong for the risk of dying from natural causes as physical health condition," says Lin Li, a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Karolinska Institutet and first author of the study.

The risk of dying from unnatural causes was reduced by a quarter in the medicated group. As this is an [observational study](#), it cannot establish a [causal relationship](#), but the results suggest that early initiation of medication may be important for people with ADHD.

At the same time, there are other health aspects to consider when prescribing these medications. In an earlier study published in 2023 in

*JAMA Psychiatry*, the same research team [showed that there is also a link](#) between ADHD medication and increased risk of hypertension and arterial diseases.

In the next step, they aim to explore the long-term effects of ADHD medication further.

"It will be crucial to establish whether the benefits we have seen in this study will persist over time. We will also try to identify any additional adverse effects associated with long-term medication," says Zheng Chang, a senior researcher at the Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics and the last author of the study.

The research team will also study the effects and mechanisms of different types of ADHD medications and how doses, duration of treatment, and sex differences may affect them.

"With such knowledge, doctors can tailor treatment plans for people with ADHD to maximize the benefits of treatment and minimize the risks," says Chang.

**More information:** Lin Li et al, ADHD Pharmacotherapy and Mortality in Individuals With ADHD, *JAMA* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2024.0851](#)

Provided by Karolinska Institutet

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