

# Nightmares in midlife may point to future cognitive decline, dementia

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Distressing dreams in middle-aged and older adults may indicate a higher risk for future cognitive decline and all-cause dementia, according to a study presented at EAN 2024, the 10th Congress of the

European Academy of Neurology, held from June 29 to July 2 in Helsinki.

Abidemi Otaiku, M.D., from Imperial College London, and colleagues examined whether distressing dreams are associated with cognitive decline and dementia in people without Parkinson disease. The analysis included 605 middle-aged adults from the Midlife in the United States study who were followed for more than 13 years, as well as 2,600 older adults from the Osteoporotic Fractures in Men Study and the Study of Osteoporotic Fractures, followed for more than seven years.

The researchers found that compared with middle-aged adults who reported having no distressing dreams at baseline, those who reported having weekly distressing dreams had a fourfold higher risk for experiencing [cognitive decline](#) (adjusted odds ratio, 3.99). Dementia risk more than doubled in [older adults](#) (adjusted odds ratio, 2.21).

"Nightmares have a very strong link with many brain and other conditions, and I strongly believe that [nightmares](#) should be asked about more often by physicians," Otaiku said in a statement.

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