

Abuse and neglect associated with increased cardiovascular disease risk for lesbian and bisexual women

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Trauma, including abuse and neglect, is associated with higher cardiovascular disease risk for lesbian and bisexual women, according to preliminary research to be presented in Chicago at the American Heart Association's Scientific Sessions 2018.

Sexual minority (lesbian and bisexual) women are more likely than heterosexual women to be stressed, use tobacco, binge drink and be obese. Why these [cardiovascular risk factors](#) occur more among sexual minority women isn't clear, but some think abuse, neglect and other trauma plays a role.

Researchers studied 547 sexual minority women, measuring three forms of childhood trauma: physical abuse, sexual abuse and parental neglect; three forms of adult trauma: physical abuse, sexual abuse and intimate partner violence; and lifetime trauma, which was the sum of childhood and adulthood trauma. They analyzed how increasing trauma severity was associated

with higher report of several cardiovascular risk factors.

Researchers found sexual minority women with increased severity of childhood, adulthood or lifetime trauma had higher risk for posttraumatic stress disorder and a perception of less social support.

Researchers also found the studied women were:

- 30 percent more likely to have anxiety if they experienced more forms of adulthood trauma.
- 41 percent more likely to be depressed if they reported increased forms of childhood trauma and 22 percent more likely to be depressed if they had experienced more forms of lifetime trauma.
- 44 percent more likely to report overeating in the past three months if they experienced increased forms of childhood trauma.
- 58 percent more likely to have diabetes if they experienced increasing severity of [childhood trauma](#), and lifetime trauma notably increased their risks of obesity and high blood pressure.

These findings suggest healthcare providers should screen for [trauma](#) as a [cardiovascular disease risk factor](#) in this population, according to the authors.

The research was recognized as the "Cardiovascular Stroke Nursing Best Abstract Award."

Provided by American Heart Association

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