

# High number of depression symptoms linked to increased risk of stroke

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People who report an elevated number of depression symptoms may be more likely to have a stroke years later than people with no depression symptoms or a low number of depression symptoms, according to a preliminary study released today that will be presented at the American Academy of Neurology's 71st Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, May 4 to 10, 2019.

"Depression is common and often goes untreated, so these results could hold great promise as we learn more about how [depression](#) may affect people's risk for stroke and other [cardiovascular problems](#) and ultimately develop ways to prevent these problems," said study author Marialaura Simonetto, MD, of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine in Florida and a member of the American Academy of Neurology. "If people with depression are at elevated risk of stroke, [early detection](#) and treatment will be even more important."

The study involved 1,104 people with an average age of 70 who had never had a stroke. The participants were followed for an average of 14

years. A total of 69 percent of the participants said they were Hispanic.

Eighteen percent of the participants, or 198 people, had elevated symptoms of depression at the start of the study. Symptoms were measured with a questionnaire that asked how often in the past week people felt sad, felt like everything they did was an effort, had a poor appetite and other questions. Scores ranged from zero to 60, with scores of at least 16 considered elevated.

During the study, 101 people had a stroke. Of those, 87 were ischemic strokes, or a stroke where [blood flow](#) to part of the brain is blocked. After adjusting for other factors that could affect stroke risk, such as diabetes, [high blood pressure](#), and smoking, researchers found that people who had elevated symptoms of depression were 75 percent more likely to develop an [ischemic stroke](#) than people without [depression symptoms](#). Every five-point increase in the score on the depression test was related to a 12-percent greater risk of ischemic stroke.

Of the 198 people with elevated symptoms of depression, 22 later developed an ischemic stroke, compared to 65 of the 906 people who had no or low numbers of depressive symptoms.

Simonetto noted that more research is needed to confirm these results. She said the study does not prove that depression causes stroke, but shows the association between the two.

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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