

Pandemic takes greater toll on mental health of aging women with trauma histories

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Beyond the physical dangers of COVID-19, the pandemic has wreaked havoc mentally and emotionally. A new study suggests the pandemic may have had a greater impact on the mental health of women with a history of childhood abuse or intimate partner violence (IPV) than with women without such histories. Study results will be presented during The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) Annual Meeting in Washington, DC, September 22-25, 2021.

Researchers from the University of Pittsburgh surveyed nearly 600 [women](#) to identify the prevalence of depression, anxiety, sleep problems, and conflicts with household members and non-household family during the COVID-19 pandemic. They specifically looked at how these problems were magnified in aging women with a history of [childhood](#) trauma or IPV (specifically, experiencing IPV before the pandemic, rather than current or ongoing IPV).

Roughly 48% and 35% of the women reported childhood trauma or past IPV, respectively. Elevated COVID-19 depressive, anxiety, and sleep

symptoms were reported by 27%, 32%, and 46% of the women, respectively. In addition, 29% and 17% of the women reported elevated conflict with household members and non-household family, respectively.

Researchers found that childhood trauma and past IPV were related to elevated depressive symptoms, sleep problems, and household conflict during the COVID-19 pandemic. Childhood trauma was additionally found to elevate anxiety symptoms and conflict with non-household family. Significant associations persisted even after adjustment for any pre-pandemic anxiety (for analyses on [childhood trauma](#)) and sleep symptoms, but not after adjustment for pre-pandemic depressive symptoms.

"Aging women with childhood abuse or IPV histories reported worse mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic than women without these histories," says Dr. Karen Jakubowski from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and lead author of the study. "Women's trauma histories and prior symptomology are critical to understand the psychosocial impacts of the pandemic."

"We will likely be dealing with the emotional fall-out of the [pandemic](#) for many years," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, NAMS medical director. "That's why studies like this one are important for informing [healthcare professionals](#) as to which patients may be at greatest risk for mental health issues."

More information: Conference: www.menopause.org/annual-meetings/2021-meeting

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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