

Menopause may put women at greater risk for Alzheimer's

[W]e are only beginning to understand is why women are more susceptible [to Alzheimer's]. What factors differentiate women from men, specifically as we reach middle age?

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It turns out that menopause affects far more than our childbearing potential. Symptoms like night sweats, hot flashes and depression originate not in the ovaries [but largely in the brain](#). These symptoms are all caused by an ebb in estrogen. The latest research, including my own work, indicates that estrogen serves to protect the female brain from aging. It stimulates neural activity and may help prevent the build up of plaques that are connected to the onset of Alzheimer's disease. When estrogen levels decline, the female brain becomes much more vulnerable.

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The good news is that as women mature into their 40s and 50s, there seems to be a window of opportunity when it is possible to detect early signs of higher Alzheimer's risk — by doing a brain-imaging test, as we did — and to take action to reduce that risk.

There is increasing evidence that hormone replacement therapies — mainly, giving women supplemental estrogen — can help to alleviate symptoms if given before menopause. We need much more research to test the efficacy and safety of hormone therapy, which has been tied to an increased risk of heart disease, blood clots and breast cancer in some cases.

Read full, original post: [The Menopause-Alzheimer's Connection](#)