

Why do women make up two-thirds of Alzheimer's patients? The answer may be found in menopause

Two-thirds of all Alzheimer's patients are women. Why?

It has often been posited that this is because women live longer than [men](#), giving the disease more time to set in. But Lisa Mosconi, a colleague of Isaacson's who directs Weill Cornell Medicine's [Women's Brain Initiative](#), wasn't buying it.

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Mosconi is in the nascent stages of a research project exploring another theory: Alzheimer's might be triggered in women years before any signs of the disease appear, during perimenopause, the period of transition into menopause. While the effects of menopause on rodent brains have been studied for decades, Mosconi says that this possibility has received surprisingly little research in humans and almost no public recognition. "Every woman knows that as you reach menopause, your hair goes dry, your skin goes dry—that's aging," she says. "Few people are aware that the same thing would happen in the brain."

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Mosconi's theory for why this is so, in a nutshell, is estrogen. During menopause, estrogen dramatically decreases. "Estrogen," Mosconi says, "is a neuroprotective hormone. When it declines, the brain is left more vulnerable. So if a woman is somehow predisposed to Alzheimer's, that's when the risk manifests itself in her brain."

Read full, original post: [What Menopause Does to Women's Brains](#)