

Women who have experienced sexual assault have a higher risk of dementia

Women who have been sexually assaulted have a higher risk of developing a type of brain damage that has been linked to cognitive decline, dementia and stroke, a new study found.

“It could be either childhood sexual abuse or adult sexual assault,” said study author Rebecca Thurston, a professor and director of the Women’s Biobehavioral Health Laboratory at the University of Pittsburgh’s Graduate School of Public Health.

“Based upon population data, most women have their sexual assaults when they are in early adolescence and early adulthood,” she added, “so these are likely early experiences that we’re seeing the marks of later in life.”

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Prior studies have found sexual trauma to be linked to [higher levels of triglycerides and blood pressure](#) in midlife, and a [three-fold greater risk](#) of developing carotid plaque, all key risk factors for heart disease.

In addition, a [2018 study](#) Thurston conducted found women who reported prior sexual assault were three times more likely to experience depression and twice as likely to have elevated anxiety and insomnia than women without a history of sexual trauma.

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Considering the widespread impact, Thurston said physicians should be asking their patients about any prior sexual trauma.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the original post here.**](#)