In a surprise finding, HDL, so-called ‘good cholesterol’, linked to dementia

A study shows that so-called “good cholesterol” may not be as healthy as previously believed.

The study, published [October 4] in the journal Neurology, claims that high or low levels of high-density lipoprotein, or HDL, could increase dementia risk for older people.

Researchers tracked more than 180,000 California residents through health surveys for about two years starting between 2002 and 2007, then tracked the group using medical records for about nine years on average. The subjects are now an average of 70 years old.

“Previous studies on this topic have been inconclusive and this study is especially informative because of the large number of participants and long follow-up,” study author Maria Glymour said in a statement.

During the course of the study, about 25,000 people developed dementia.

People with the highest levels of HDL cholesterol had a 15 percent higher rate of dementia compared to those in the middle group, the study found. Those with the lowest levels had a 7 percent higher rate of dementia compared to those in the middle group.

The recommended “healthy” HDL amount is 40 mg/dL in blood. Study subjects’ average was about 54 mg/dL.

The study also tracked LDL cholesterol, dubbed “bad cholesterol,” but found that it did not significantly impact dementia rates.

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