

Does migraine protect your memory?

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Women with a lifetime history of migraine showed less of a performance decline over time on cognitive tests than women who didn't have migraines. Researchers say medications for migraine, diet and behavior changes may play a role in helping women with migraine protect their memory. The findings are published in the April 24, 2007, issue of *Neurology*, the scientific journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

For the community based study, 1,448 women, of which 204 had migraine, underwent a series of cognitive tests beginning in 1993 and again approximately 12 years later.

The study found while women with migraine performed worse on cognitive tests, such as word recall, at the beginning of the study, their performance declined 17 percent less over time than women without migraine. Women over age 50 with migraine showed the least amount of cognitive decline on a test used to assess cognitive functioning.

"Some medications for migraine headaches, such as ibuprofen, which may have a protective effect on memory, may be partially responsible for our findings, but it's unlikely to explain this association given we adjusted for this possibility in our study and the medications showed no indication of a significant protective effect," said study author Amanda Kalaydjian, PhD, MS, of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

Dr. Kalaydjian says another factor that needs to be explored is the possibility that women with migraine may change their diet or behavior

in some way that might improve cognition. "For example, alternative treatment for migraine includes adequate sleep, as well as behavioral and relaxation techniques, and a reduction in caffeine," said Dr. Kalaydjian.

"Despite these theories, it seems more likely that there may be some underlying biological mechanism, such as changes in blood vessels or underlying differences in brain activity, which results in decreased cognitive decline over time," said Dr. Kalaydjian. "More research is needed to fully understand how migraine affects cognition."

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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