

# Diabetes, dementia can be deadly combination

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(HealthDay)—The risk of death from dangerously low blood sugar is

much higher among seniors who have both diabetes and dementia than those with diabetes alone, a new study finds.

Researchers analyzed data from nearly 20,000 people aged 65 and older with type 1 or type 2 [diabetes](#) who were followed for up to five years after their first recorded low [blood](#) sugar episode.

Those with both diabetes and [dementia](#) had a 67 percent higher risk of death following dangerously low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) than those with diabetes alone, according to study findings.

"Hypoglycemia is an under-recognized risk factor for death in older adults with diabetes and dementia," said study author Dr. Katharina Mattishent, an Alzheimer's Society clinical research fellow at Norwich Medical School in England.

"In this vulnerable group, clinicians and patients should move away from relentless pursuit of strict glucose-lowering targets, she said. "The focus must be directed at rigorous detection of hypoglycemia using continuous glucose monitoring devices."

The findings were presented Monday at the annual meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes, in Berlin. Such research is considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"With no new dementia drugs in 15 years, minimizing risk and improving care is key. We know that diabetes can raise the risk of developing dementia, and with both of these illnesses on the rise we urgently need to understand this relationship better," said James Pickett, head of research at the Alzheimer's Society.

"Very low blood [sugar](#) levels are clearly dangerous to anyone with diabetes, and this suggests the effects might be even more extreme in

people with dementia," Pickett said in a meeting news release.

"The study didn't show cause and effect but, given the dangers of [low blood sugar](#) levels, clearly it should be managed carefully," he added.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases has more on [hypoglycemia](#).

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