

Hearing loss linked to early memory and thinking problems

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Researchers at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2017 have suggested that people with a family history of Alzheimer's disease who experience hearing loss, are more likely to also experience a decline in their brain function.

The researchers found evidence to suggest a link between hearing loss and [mild cognitive impairment](#), a condition that can precede the onset of [dementia](#). They suggest that diagnosing and treating hearing loss might help to limit the growing impact of Alzheimer's disease.

The Wisconsin-based researchers followed a group of 783 people in the Wisconsin Registry for Alzheimer's prevention (WRAP), who have a parental history of Alzheimer's disease, and were periodically tested for their ability to remember, process, and learn information. Over the course of four years, 72 (9.2 percent) participants reported being diagnosed with hearing loss. The group who experienced problems with their hearing were more likely to score significantly lower on cognitive tests and were roughly three times as likely to be assessed as having mild cognitive impairment.

Dr Rosa Sancho, Head of Research at Alzheimer's Research UK, said:

"Dementia and hearing loss often go hand-in-hand. Treating hearing loss can make life easier for people living with dementia, but we don't yet know whether it could help reduce the risk of developing diseases like Alzheimer's in the first place. This study points to hearing loss preceding

changes in memory and thinking ability, but doesn't tell us if it could actually be contributing to processes in the brain that cause dementia."

"This is an active and growing area of research that could reveal new approaches for limiting the risk of dementia. With no treatments yet able to stop the progression of dementia, it is crucial that we continue to invest in research into ways we can reduce our risk of the condition. Many people develop some degree of [hearing loss](#) as they get older and anyone with any concerns about this aspect of their health should discuss it with their GP."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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