

A shorter reproductive window in women linked to increased dementia risk

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A team of US-based researchers has found that a shorter reproductive

window is associated with a higher dementia risk. They also found a higher risk of dementia in women who had undergone a hysterectomy. The findings are published today (Wednesday 27 March) in the scientific journal *Neurology*.

Dr. Rosa Sancho, Head of Research from Alzheimer's Research UK, said, "Two thirds of people with [dementia](#) are women and while some of this difference is explained by women living longer, research has also implicated hormones like oestrogen. The start of periods and menopause are significant events in a woman's life and it's important to understand how these biological changes might affect long-term brain health.

"This large study links shorter reproductive period, and hysterectomy, to an increased dementia risk but it cannot tell us why the factors are associated. While researchers propose that shorter exposure to oestrogen throughout life could impact brain health, the study did not measure levels of the hormone directly or look at other factors that could influence oestrogen levels.

"Alzheimer's Research UK is currently funding research at the University of Cambridge to further explore why [women](#) may have a greater risk of dementia than men. This research is helpful in giving greater clarity on a complex area of human biology, which has seen mixed results in previous studies.

"Alzheimer's disease is caused by a complex mix of age, genetics and lifestyle factors – some of which are in our control to change and others aren't. The best current evidence suggests that not smoking, only drinking within the recommended limits, staying mentally and physically active, eating a balanced diet, and keeping blood pressure and [cholesterol levels](#) in check can all help to keep our brains healthy as we age."

Provided by Alzheimer's Research UK

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