

lines 31-8. 2018

Strokes may double risk of dementia

Chris Smyth Health Editor

Having a stroke could double the risk of dementia, the largest overview of its kind has concluded.

Analysis of data on 3.2 million people in 48 studies concluded that people who had had a stroke had a 69 per cent likelihood of developing dementia, rising to more than twice as likely for those who had suffered one recently.

Researchers, who believe that damage to the brain caused by bleeding during strokes can contribute to dementia, say that preventing stroke could be a way to prevent dementia.

More than 200,000 people a year in Britain develop dementia and potential treatments have failed. Ilianna Lourida, of the University of Exeter Medical School, one of the study authors, said: "Given how common stroke and dementia are, this strong link is an important finding." Studies vary in the size of the risk and Dr Lourida says that the extent of brain damage in stroke could explain this. They found hints that men might be at higher risk.

Laura Phipps, of Alzheimer's Research UK, said: "There is mounting evidence to suggest that what's good for the heart is good for the brain and maintaining good vascular health is one of the key things people can do to reduce their risk of dementia. The best evidence suggests that not smoking, only drinking in moderation, staying mentally and physically active, eating a balanced diet and keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol levels in check can all help to keep our brains healthy."

David Llewellyn, a co-author of the paper, said the study "reinforced the importance of protecting the blood supply to the brain".