

Discrimination Linked to Early Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

Racial discrimination during middle age was linked to higher levels of biomarkers that predict cognitive decline.

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A recent study found that Black Americans who experience [racial discrimination](#) during midlife had an increased likelihood of showing signs of [Alzheimer's disease](#) and neurodegeneration, [Everyday Health](#) reports.

About [40% of Black adults](#) reported experiencing at least one act of [discrimination](#) last year, according to KFF Health News.

Overall, Black adults are about twice as likely as white adults to have Alzheimer's or other [dementias](#), according to the [Alzheimer's Association](#). While genetics and a higher rate of diseases (like heart disease) that affect brain health factor into this disparity, many experts believe the stress of racial discrimination contributes to cognitive decline.

Published in [Alzheimer's and Dementia](#), the current study used blood samples collected every two to three years and three interviews conducted over a 17-year period from 255 Black Americans. Researchers then analyzed [biomarkers](#) associated with dementias, the presence of which may help predict the onset of the condition later in life.

"This could allow us to better identify those individuals that are at highest risk and possibly intervene to improve outcomes," coauthor Michelle Mielke, PhD, professor of epidemiology and prevention at Wake Forest University School of Medicine in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, told [Everyday Health](#).

In 2019, when participants reached the average age of 57, researchers found that increased discrimination during middle age significantly correlated with higher levels of two biomarkers, one of Alzheimer's pathology and the other of neurodegeneration.

These findings add to current evidence that chronic stress from racial discrimination between ages 40 and 50 could influence biology and contribute to Alzheimer's disease progression and neurodegeneration later in life, according to Mielke.

This study emphasizes the importance of continuing to research “the everyday challenges and circumstances experienced by Black Americans as a strategy for identifying the factors that explain their increased risk for dementia,” the authors wrote.

To read more, click [#Alzheimer's Disease](#). There, you'll find headlines such as “[Racial Stressors May Cause Premature Brain Aging in Blacks](#),” “[New Alzheimer's Drug Raises Hopes — Along With Questions](#)” and “[Whole Grains Linked to Lower Level of Cognitive Decline in Black Americans](#).”

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