Migraines raise risk of heart attack and early death, scientists find

[Sarah Knapton](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/authors/sarah-knapton/), science editor

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Women with migraines have higher risk of dying from heart problems and statins could help lower the chances of early death, a new study suggests.

Although it has been known for some time that [migraines](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/health/news/10588318/Magnetic-pulse-can-stop-migraine.html)raise the risk of stroke, it is the first study to show the headaches also increase the cardiovascular disease and dying early.

A team of German and US researchers followed more than 115,000 women aged between 25 and 42 for more than ten years. They found those who suffered migraines were 50 per cent more likely to die during the period.

“These results further add to the evidence that migraine should be considered an important risk marker for cardiovascular disease, at least in women, and there is no reason why the findings can't be applicable to men,” said lead author Dr Tobias Kurth, Institute of Public Health, Berlin, Germany

 "Given the high prevalence of migraine in the general population, an urgent need exists to understand the biological processes involved and to provide preventive solutions for patients.

“Future targeted research, such as on whether statins and vitamin D reduce the burden of migraine and cardiovascular disease is urgently warranted to provide answers to patients and their treating physicians.”

In a linked editorial, Rebecca Burch from Harvard Medical School said: “The risk is small at the level of the individual patient, but still important at a population level because migraine is so prevalent.

“The findings of this study raise many questions about treatment. Should patients with migraine be treated with statins or aspirin?”

Maureen Talbot, Senior Cardiac Nurse at the British Heart Foundation said: “This large study of young women over a number of years shows an association between migraine and an increased risk of developing cardiovascular disease.

“However further research is needed to establish possible cause for this and also to determine if the findings applied to men and older age groups.”

The research was published in the British Medical Journal.