# **Migraine sufferers are more likely to have a stroke during surgery, study finds**

* **Migraines are believed to affect around 1 in 5 women and nearly 1 in 15 men**
* **But the benign condition can increase the risk of stroke during an operation**
* **While Harvard researchers also found it makes hospital readmission more likely**
* **And those who suffer migraines with aura are at the highest risk**

By [Stephen Matthews For Mailonline](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/search.html?s=&authornamef=Stephen+Matthews+For+Mailonline)

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Surgical patients with a history of migraines have a greater risk of stroke, scientists warn.

Despite being viewed as a benign condition, it also increases the chances of being readmitted to hospital, a new study found.

While those who have migraines with aura - which happens after seeing flashing lights - were found to be at the highest risk.

Experts now say that the debilitating headaches - which affect one in five women - should be included in an individual's risk assessment before having an operation.

Previous research has linked migraines to stroke due to their blood pressure altering effects.

But Harvard Medical School researchers wanted to assess the risk factor during surgery - when the odds of stroke are increased.

They carried out a study of 124,558 surgical patients between January 2007 and August 2014.

Patients were on average 52 years old, and slightly more than half were women.

In the study, published in the British Medical Journal, they found that 771 strokes had occurred.

And of all the patients who suffered from the medical emergency, 11.5 per cent were found to have had a migraine.

The researchers then estimated that 2.4 strokes would happen for every 1,000 surgical patients.

This risk increases to 4.3 for every 1,000 patients who have had a previous migraine diagnosis.

However, for adults who suffer from migraine with aura, the figure jumps to 6.3 strokes in every 1,000 patients.

In total, 10,088 patients were re-admitted to hospital within 30 days, they discovered.

But the odds for readmission were 1.31 times higher for patients with a migraine than those without.

Their findings remained true even after adjusting for disease, sex, age and pre-existing vascular disease that may have increased the chances of stroke.

Study author Dr Matthias Eikermann said: 'Given the high prevalence of migraine in the general population, the migraine-perioperative ischemic stroke association carries public health importance.

'Physicians should be aware of this increased perioperative risk, particularly in patients with migraine who present without traditional risk factors for stroke.'

According to the World Health Organization, about 6.7 million people died of stroke in 2012.

It occurs when blood flow to an area of the brain is cut off due to a clot blocking the path or a leak in a vessel.

As a result, brain cells become starved of oxygen and often die - killing nearly a quarter of sufferers.