**PAIN IN THE HEAD**

# **Migraine sufferers are ‘MORE likely to suffer a stroke after surgery’**

The risk was found to be greatest for those people who suffer migraine aura, where they see flashing lights

BY LIZZIE PARRY, DIGITAL HEALTH EDITOR

10th January 2017, 11:30 pm

PEOPLE plagued by agonising migraines are more likely to suffer a stroke after surgery, experts have warned.

The risk is highest for sufferers who see flashing lights and experience other warning signs before their migraines strike, known as an aura.

Experts say their findings mean all patients must be quizzed about their history of migraines before undergoing an op.

They believe migraine sufferers could be genetically more likely to suffer a stroke.

And they suggest they have a greater risk of cerebral ischemia – where there isn’t enough blood flow to the brain, therefore increasing the risk of stroke.

Last year the NHS performed 10 million operations – stroke is a known complication of any surgery.

Stroke is the fourth biggest killer in the UK, and is second across the world.

It kills twice as many women as breast cancer and more men than prostate and testicular cancer combined.

Migraines are often seen as a minor condition, despite the increased risk of stroke.

But, one in seven people suffer migraines, with around 190,000 attacks plaguing people in the UK each day.

Harvard experts 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.”

Researchers at Harvard Medical School, led by Matthias Eikermann, studied 124,558 surgical patients at Massachusetts General Hospital and two other hospitals, between January 2007 and August 2014.

The average age of the patients was 52, and just over half were women.

Of the 124,558 surgical cases, 771 patients suffered a stroke.