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**Autoimmune disorders linked to an increased risk of dementia**

PEOPLE with autoimmune disorders may be 20 per cent more likely to develop dementia, according to an analysis of 1.8 million hospital cases in England.

For example, people who have multiple sclerosis – caused by a malfunction of the immune system – had almost double the normal risk of getting dementia.

Other autoimmune disorders were also associated with rises in dementia risk. The skin condition psoriasis was linked to a 29 per cent increase, and it was 46 per cent higher in people who have lupus erythematosus, a disorder that involves rashes and fatigue (*Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, [doi.org/b2jk](http://dx.doi.org/b2jk)).

However, people with rheumatoid arthritis, another autoimmine disorder, had a 10 per cent lower risk of dementia. This could be because many people with arthritis take drugs like aspirin and ibuprofen, which may tame inflammation that could otherwise contribute to causing dementia. “They reduce inflammation and that could explain why there’s less spillover,” says Michael Goldacre at the University of Oxford, who led the study.

There was also a strong link between autoimmune disease and heart and circulatory problems, which may explain some of the increased dementia risk. Vascular dementia involves poor blood flow in the brain, and the team found that people with autoimmune diseases are 29 per cent more likely to develop this form of dementia, compared with only a 6 per cent increase in Alzheimer’s risk.

*This article appeared in print under the headline “Multiple sclerosis and psoriasis linked to higher dementia risk”*