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REVEALED: New simple **test** PREDICTS your risk of **dementia**  
  
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A GROUNDBREAKING discovery by scientists promises to help GPs predict a person's **dementia** risk.

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A new breakthrough **test** could accurately predict **dementia** risk

Scientists - from University College London - may have developed an accurate and simple formula enabling GPs to work out a patient's risk of developing **dementia** well before the condition takes hold.

The new research suggests that an easy formula using information from routine visits to the family doctor can pinpoint their chances of developing the degenerative condition.

The formula combines social and **lifestyle** factors, such as poverty and BMI , with medical diagnoses and drug prescriptions to predict possible onset of the mental illness.

The findings may offer significant hope to many vulnerable individuals so they can take steps to help ward off a devastating condition for which there is currently no known cure.

**Alzheimer's** affects one in 20 over the age of 65. In the UK, some 850,000 are affected by**dementia** - costing the nation an estimated £26billion a year.

The mathematical **algorithm** - called **Dementia** Risk Score - "performed well" in forecasting the danger for 60 to 79 year olds, reports the journal BMC Medicine.

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The scientists predict it may help GPs predict the onset of **dementia** Related articles **Alzheimer's**prescriptions INCREASE six-fold in just 10 years Parkinson's therapy is 'INEFFECTIVE' and needs URGENT review, says...

In the study researchers used 930,395 **patients' records** to build a simple computer formula that predicted their risk of future **dementia** diagnoses within FIVE years. None had any previous signs of the disease.

It used risk factors including socio-demographic measures such as age, sex and social deprivation,**health and lifestyle** measurements like alcohol use, BMI and blood pressure, diagnoses such as diabetes and heart disease and use of prescription medication.

The researchers compared these factors with the newly recorded **dementia** cases during the follow up period.

The exciting discovery could help rule out patients at very low risk for conditions such as **Alzheimer's**disease in primary care.

Dr Kate Walters, of University College London, said: "It was a good discriminator, with a score of O.8 where 1 would be 100 percent accurate.

"This is better than any other **test** out there at the moment.

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Scientists are pleased with the potential accuracy of the formula

"Recent research has indicated people who eat healthily, such as following a mediterranean diet, and exercise are less likely to develop **dementia**, so knowing risk in advance could encourage people to change their **lifestyle**, which can also combat heart disease and stroke, for instance.

"There are also drugs showing promise in treatment of early **dementia**, so identifying people before they develop symptoms may be vital in the future.

"But we don't want to cause anxiety, and some people may not want to know their risk of **dementia**in later life.

"So there are things to consider, but if NHS England recommend the **test** there is no reason why it cannot be available soon.

"I would also point out the overall risk of people under the age of 80 developing **dementia** is still relatively small, even in the higher risk group."

The score could be especially useful for identifying people at a very low risk of **dementia**, but are anxious about developing the condition, as recorded by their GP.

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It may bring hope to those who are anxious about developing the devastating condition

As the current model is based on UK patient data, the researchers suggest further **tests** to assess the performance of their risk score for populations outside of the UK.

Dr Walters added: "Before this score is widely used we would recommend that it is independently tested in further populations of people, and that the ethical implications of using it in practice are considered."

One in five people do not think it is possible to reduce their risk of **dementia**, despite growing evidence the condition is linked to **lifestyle**.

Research suggests one in three cases could be prevented by increased activity levels, a reduction in smoking and tackling **health** problems such as obesity and diabetes.

Just one hour's exercise a week may reduce the chance of **Alzheimer's** disease by almost HALF.

The symptoms of **dementia** may include memory loss and difficulties with thinking, problem-solving or language. It is caused when the brain is damaged by disease, such as **Alzheimer's** or a series of strokes.

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