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Simple **test** to spot **dementia** risk  
  
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**DEMENTIA** can be predicted with a **test** that is 84 per cent accurate, British scientists claim.

Their formula uses data routinely recorded by GPs to give a clear calculation of risk.

The **Dementia** Risk Score rates the chances of being struck down with the harrowing illness after assessing daily routine and medical history.

In eight out of 10 people aged 60 to 79, it predicted the risk of developing **dementia** within five years.

It is hoped the computer programme could be used to allow the vulnerable to take steps to delay the onset.

Dr Kate Walters, of University College London, said: "This is better than any other **test.** We don't want to cause anxiety and some people may not want to know their risk of **dementia**, so there are things to consider.

"But if NHS England recommends the **test** there is no reason why it cannot be available soon. This could help general practitioners working with people who are anxious."

Researchers used 930,395 **patient records** - none showing signs of the illness - to devise the formula. It combines factors such as age, sex and social deprivation with **health,** daily routines and prescription drugs.

Indicators such as depression, stroke, alcohol intake, diabetes, irregular heart rate, smoking and high blood pressure are used to produce a risk percentage.

Other known risk factors such as physical activity and education are not included as they are not normally assessed routinely by GPs. The **test** was assessed against a separate set of **patient records**and was able to predict people who are at very low risk of developing **dementia** over the next five years with 84 per cent accuracy. It was less good for people aged 80-plus.

Existing scores require additional data, limiting their use in general practice. But the **algorithm,**developed by UCL with funding from the National Institute for **Health** Research, can assess risk without the need to harvest further data.

The research, published in the journal BMC Medicine, showed it was a "good discriminator", with a score of 0.84 where 1 is accurate.

The **test** could help doctors rule out patients at very low risk of conditions such as **Alzheimer's** while encouraging healthier routines.

Scientists are optimistic about **tests** of solanezumab and aducanumab, antibody infusions designed to destroy amyloid protein buildup, a hallmark of **Alzheimer's**.

Accurate They hope the drugs will provide the first effective treatment for early-onset **dementia**.

Professor Christian Holscher, of Lancaster University, said: "Some are sceptical about early-diagnosis tools for **Alzheimer's** because we can't help those people but it is essential to have them ready for when new drugs enter the market."

Last night Dr Doug Brown, of the **Alzheimer's** Society, said: "The fact this **test** uses routine information gathered during a GP consultation is certainly advantageous but before it is recommended for use in clinics it would need to be backed up by further research.

"We would need to carefully consider the ethical implications of disclosing a person's risk score."

There are 850,000 **dementia** sufferers in Britain and a new case is diagnosed every three minutes.

**GRAPHIC:** Further research... Dr Doug Brown