

## Could This Vaccine Be the Answer to Reducing Alzheimer's Risk?

Throughout history, inventions and research intended for one use, ends up being a discovery of a lifetime. Penicillin, pacemakers, and x-rays are just a few of our history's accidental life-saving discoveries - and we might be living through another one. Recent research is showing that the flu shot and pneumonia vaccine might reduce Alzheimer's risk.

Even though there has been the myth floating around for years that the flu shot could potentially lead to Alzheimer's disease, researchers are finding it could be the very opposite.

Presented at this year's Alzheimer's Association International Conference (virtually of course), researchers revealed the results and evidence from two different studies that could prove that vaccines could help reduce the risk of Alzheimer's disease.

The first study came from a team at the University of Texas that combed through millions of medical records in a national database. The goal was to find factors that affected a person's risk of getting certain diseases, including Alzheimer's. They found that one of them was flu shots.

The research team found this odd, so they took a closer look at the medical records of about 9,000 people who were at least 60 years old. Some had received a seasonal flu shot, while some had not. After more deep diving into the medical records the team found that those who got at least one flu shot had a 17% reduction in risk. And people who got regular vaccinations saw their risk drop another 13%.

"We've always known that vaccines are very important to our overall health," says Maria Carrillo, chief science officer of the Alzheimer's Association. "And maybe they even contribute to protecting our memory, our cognition, our brain."

However, Albert Amran, a medical student of the McGovern Medical School at the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston and an author of the study, cautions that the amount of benefit from flu vaccination could be different in a different group of people. "There is a protective effect," he says. "How much is something that needs to be quantified with a more intensive study."

The second study whose results were also presented focused on the effect of both flu and pneumonia vaccines and how it can affect Alzheimer's risk.

A team from Duke University and the University of North Carolina studied the medical records of more than 5,000 people who were at least 65 years old. Those who received a pneumonia vaccine before age 75 were at least 25% less likely to be diagnosed with Alzheimer's, says Svetlana Ukraintseva, an associate research professor in the Biodemography of Aging Research Unit at Duke's Social Science Research Institute. But in this study, giving a flu vaccine in addition to the pneumonia vaccine did not cause any additional reduction in risk, Ukraintseva says.

Scientists don't know why vaccinations might reduce the risk of Alzheimer's. But previous

research has hinted at a connection. And there are several potential explanations. One is that vaccines for the flu and pneumonia may be protective because the two diseases they are designed to prevent are known to affect the brain.

Another possibility involves evidence linking Alzheimer's to a general weakening in the immune system and to changes that allow more bacteria and viruses into the brain.

The idea that we could use vaccines that we already have to help reduce Alzheimer's risk sounds almost like a miracle. Scientists and researchers are now analyzing several vaccines, including those for flu and pneumonia, as possible ways to improve immunity overall.

To learn more about these studies and everything being presented at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference, click the link:

[https://www.alz.org/aaic/releases\\_2020/vaccines-dementia-risk.asp](https://www.alz.org/aaic/releases_2020/vaccines-dementia-risk.asp)

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