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## Teens with migraine at greater risk of suicide

ST. PAUL, Minn – Teens who have chronic daily headache, especially those with migraine headaches, are at greater risk for suicide than teens who don't have migraines, according to a study published in the May 1, 2007, issue of *Neurology*<sup>®</sup>, the scientific journal of the American Academy of Neurology. Teens with migraine are also more likely to have other psychiatric disorders such as depression and panic disorder.

"Teens with chronic daily headache should be screened for psychiatric disorders so they can get the treatment and help they need," said study author Shuu-Jiun Wang, MD, of the Taipei Veterans General Hospital and National Yang-Ming University School of Medicine in Taipei, Taiwan.

For the study, the researchers surveyed 7,900 students age 12 to 14 at five middle schools in Taiwan. Those who reported frequent headaches were interviewed by a neurologist and their headache type was diagnosed. A total of 121 teens with chronic daily headaches were then screened for psychiatric disorders. Chronic daily headache was defined as headaches 15 or more days per month for two or more hours per days, lasting for more than three months. Chronic migraine is a type of chronic daily headache.

Nearly 50 percent of those with chronic daily headaches had one or more psychiatric disorder, with 21 percent having major depression and 19 percent having panic disorder. Twenty percent were at high risk of suicide. "These numbers are much higher than those reported among the general population of teens of the same ages in Taiwan," Wang said.

Those with migraine headaches were most likely to have a psychiatric disorder. They were 3.5 times more likely to have a psychiatric disorder than those without migraine. And teens whose migraines came with an aura, or a warning sensation that comes before the headache, were even more likely to have psychiatric disorders. Teens with migraine with aura were six times more likely to be at high suicide risk than those without migraine.

Researchers don't exactly know how underlying mechanisms may link migraine and psychiatric disorders, although they do know that migraine, depression and the tendency toward suicide are all related to problems with the levels of serotonin in the brain.

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The study was supported by grants from the Taiwan National Science Council and the Taipei Veterans General Hospital.

The American Academy of Neurology, an association of more than 20,000 neurologists and neuroscience professionals, is dedicated to improving patient care through education and research. A neurologist is a doctor with specialized training in diagnosing, treating and managing disorders of the brain and nervous system such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, and multiple sclerosis.

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