

Blood Pressure Drugs Tied to Risk of Falls

By Anahad O'Connor

Older adults who take blood pressure drugs have a greater risk of serious falls, a new study reports.



Researchers looked at nearly 5,000 Americans over age 70 during a three-year period. They found that those who were taking antihypertensive medications had a 30 to 40 percent greater likelihood of experiencing severe fall-related injuries like hip fractures and head trauma.

A majority of older adults have high blood pressure, and antihypertensive medications are among the most commonly used drugs nationwide. Though the drugs help lower the risk of strokes and heart attacks, the size of the

reduction in risk is comparable to the increase in risk of serious injuries from falls, said Dr. Mary E. Tinetti, chief of geriatrics at Yale-New Haven Hospital and an author of the new study, published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

“The question is, are we trading off the benefit in terms of stroke prevention for the increased risk in serious fall injuries?” she said.

The study shows only that there is a correlation between antihypertensive medications and falls, not that the drugs cause falls. But Dr. Tinetti said they might lead to falls by hampering alertness or by causing blood pressure to plummet when people stand up.