

Stress does shrink your brain, research shows

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Long periods of stress "shrink the brain"
Stress chemicals can kill off brain cells
Memories are particularly susceptible



SUFFERING from stress for long periods of time can shrink the brain - and it can even cause dementia, researchers claim.

Chemicals released by the body during prolonged stress are toxic to brain tissue, they found, reported *The Daily Telegraph*. Types of stress linked to the condition include that suffered by those who were in loveless marriages, dead-end jobs and post-traumatic situations.

The research suggests chemicals called corticosteroids, which aid the "fight or flight" response, can kill off brain cells if the concentrations remain high over long periods. The hippocampus, a part of the brain involved in forming memories, is particularly susceptible.

The discovery first came about after doctors treated Wall Street bosses for post-traumatic stress after the September 11 attacks. Brain scans showed that the executives' hippocampuses had shrunk to the size of those of elderly people suffering from dementia.