

# THE MILLION WOMEN STUDY

A national study of women's health

March 2026 Newsletter

## THANK YOU

We are grateful to study participants, collaborators and funders, the Medical Research Council and Cancer Research UK, for their continued support. Follow-up data on the health of participants now spans 30 years, and allows us to answer many important questions related to women's health.

## STUDY HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. The aetiology of breast cancer subtypes: results from the Million Women Study

We found that many well-known risk factors mainly affect the risk of developing the most common, hormone-related breast cancers. These include having a first child later, going through menopause later, being overweight, drinking alcohol, and using menopausal hormone therapy. Some factors were linked to a slightly higher risk of less common and more aggressive breast cancers, including past use of the contraceptive pill and not breastfeeding.

*Reeves et al, Breast Cancer Research, 2025*

### 2. Hypertension in pregnancy and in midlife and the risk of dementia: prospective study of 1.3 million UK women

We found that having high blood pressure in mid-life increases the risk of dementia in older age, particularly vascular dementia. It was not linked to Alzheimer's disease. We also found that high blood pressure during pregnancy had little effect on dementia risk.

*Floud et al, Alzheimer's and Dementia, 2025*

### 3. Invitation for FOBt screening and colorectal cancer mortality: A prospective analysis in the Million Women Study cohort

Women who did not take part in bowel cancer screening were more likely to smoke, live in more deprived areas, and had a higher risk of dying, including from bowel cancer. Being invited for screening was linked to fewer deaths from distal colon cancers, but not from proximal colon cancers or rectal cancer.

*Blanks et al, International Journal of Cancer, 2025*

### 4. Prospective associations of diabetes with 15 cancers in 2.2 million UK and Chinese adults

We found that diabetes is linked to a higher risk of several cancers, particularly cancers of the liver, pancreas, and bladder. The link with diabetes was strongest for liver cancer and was greater in people who were overweight or who drank more alcohol. *Liu et al, Journal of the National Cancer Institute, 2025*

## BLOOD SAMPLE COLLECTION

We recently invited some Million Women Study participants to provide additional blood samples by post. We were delighted by the high level of interest, and as we have now reached our initial target, blood sample collection is paused for the time being. Some participants have already taken part, and others may be invited in the future if sample collection resumes. We are very grateful for the continued support.

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

By taking part, you are helping us build knowledge that will benefit women now and in years to come. To stay informed about the latest updates please visit our website at [www.millionwomenstudy.org](http://www.millionwomenstudy.org). If you have any comments or suggestions, please email us at: [millionwomenstudy@ndph.ox.ac.uk](mailto:millionwomenstudy@ndph.ox.ac.uk). To maximise the value of the study for scientific research, we welcome applications from bona fide researchers for controlled access to pseudonymised study data for health research. Further information is available on our website.



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