


Smoking May Boost Irregular Heart Beat Risk

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MONDAY, July 16, 2018 (HealthDay News) -- The more you smoke, the greater your chances of developing a common heart rhythm disorder that increases your risk of stroke and early death, researchers say.

"If you smoke, stop smoking, and if you don't smoke, don't start," said study author Dagfinn Aune, a postdoctoral researcher at Imperial College London.

"We found that smokers are at increased risk of atrial fibrillation, but the risk is reduced considerably in those who quit," said Aune, who is also an associate professor at Bjorknes University College in Oslo, Norway.

Atrial fibrillation, or a-fib, will affect one-quarter of middle-aged American and European adults. A-fib causes 20 percent to 30 percent of all strokes, and boosts the chances of premature death.

For the new study, researchers analyzed 29 studies that included nearly 678,000 people in North America, Europe, Australia and Japan.

The findings showed that, compared with not smoking, puffing 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 or 29 cigarettes a day was associated with a 9 percent, 17 percent, 25 percent, 32 percent, 39 percent, and 45 percent increased risk of atrial fibrillation, respectively.

Every 10 "pack-years" of smoking was associated with a 16 percent increased risk of developing a-fib. Pack-years are the number of packs of cigarettes smoked per day multiplied by the number of years a person has smoked.

When compared to people who never smoked, the risk of developing a-fib was 32 percent higher among current smokers, 21 percent higher among current and former smokers combined, and 9 percent higher among former smokers, the researchers said.

"Our results provide further evidence of the health benefits of quitting smoking and, even better, to never start smoking in the first place," Aune said in a news release from the European Society of Cardiology.

"This is important from a public health perspective to prevent atrial fibrillation and many other chronic diseases," he added.

The study was published July 12 in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology*.

More information

The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more on [atrial fibrillation](#).