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Exercise Cuts Risk of Stroke

Even moderate levels of activity produce results, study finds

FRIDAY, Aug. 5 (HealthDay News) -- High levels of leisure-time physical activity -- such as swimming, running or heavy gardening -- can cut your stroke risk, the results of a Finnish study suggest.

The study of 47,721 Finns, ages 25 to 64, also found that cycling or walking to work each day helps reduce the risk of stroke.

Study participants who reported high levels of leisure-time physical activity had a 26 percent lower risk of any kind of stroke than those with a low level of physical activity. People with a moderate level of physical activity had a 14 percent lower risk of stroke than those with low activity levels.

"Since the increase in computerization and mechanization has resulted in ever-increasing numbers of people being sedentary for most of their working time, adding short time exercise during working breaks or adding walking activity during work time is recommended. We believe it would be cost efficient for employers," study lead investigator Gang Hu of the National Public Health Institute in Finland, said in a prepared statement.



In their report, published in the Aug. 5 issue of the journal *Stroke*, the investigators also examined the link between levels of physical activity and the risk for specific kinds of stroke. Compared to people with low levels of physical activity, the risk of ischemic stroke -- caused by a blood clot that blocks blood flow to the brain -- was 20 percent lower for those with high physical activity levels and 13 percent lower for those with moderate activity levels.

The risk of subarachnoid stroke -- caused by bleeding between the brain and its membrane -- was 54 percent lower among people with high activity levels and 13 percent lower among those with moderate activity levels. The risk for intracranial hemorrhage -- bleeding into the brain -- was 37 percent lower for people with high activity levels and 23 percent lower for those with moderate activity levels.

Compared to people who got no exercise going to work, those who walked or cycled to work for more than 30 minutes had an 11 percent lower risk of stroke, while those who got one to 29 minutes of exercise on the way to work had an eight percent lower stroke risk.

"People should increase their physical activity during leisure time or commuting to lower the risk of stroke," Hu said.-- Robert Preidt

SOURCE: American Heart Association, news release, Aug. 4, 2005

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Women Smokers Married to Smokers at Higher Stroke Risk - It's a six-fold greater risk than for women smokers with nonsmoking spouses, study says

THURSDAY, Aug. 4 (HealthDay News) -- Women smokers whose spouses also smoke have a nearly six times greater risk of stroke than women smokers with nonsmoking spouses, a new report reveals.

"There is evidence suggesting that your exposure to secondhand smoke can increase your chances of getting heart disease. We asked if that was also true for stroke," study lead author Dr. Adnan I. Qureshi, professor and director of the cerebrovascular program in the Zeenat Qureshi Stroke Research Center, at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, said in a prepared statement.

He and his colleagues analyzed data from 5,379 women. Of these, 2,347 were current or former smokers and 1,904 of those were married to smokers.

"We found that cigarette-smoking women with cigarette-smoking spouses had almost a six times higher relative risk of total stroke than cigarette-smoking women with nonsmoking spouses," Qureshi said.

Women smokers with smoking spouses had 5.7 times higher total stroke risk and 4.8 times greater risk for ischemic stroke -- caused by a blood clot that blocks blood flow to the brain.

The study found that nonsmoking women with smoking spouses didn't have a significantly higher incidence of stroke compared to nonsmoking women with nonsmoking spouses. However, smoking spouses may take steps to avoid exposing their nonsmoking partners to smoke, Qureshi said.

"If physicians are to make a real impact on reducing stroke risk among their patients, they should not only address their patients' smoking habits but also those of their spouses or partners," Qureshi said.

The study appears in the Aug. 5 issue of the journal *Stroke*. -- Robert Preidt

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