

Smoking More Than Doubles The Risk Of Rheumatoid Arthritis

Smoking just a few cigarettes each day can more than double a woman's risk of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), according to a new study.

The research was conducted by scientists from the Karolinska Institutet and Karolinska University Hospital and was published in the journal *Arthritis Research & Therapy*.

Although the likelihood decreases after a person quits smoking, he or she still has a higher probability to develop RA fifteen years after stopping, the experts discovered.

For the purpose of the study, data were gathered and examined from the Swedish Mammography Cohort, which included 34,000 women between the ages of 54 and 89 - of whom, 219 had RA.

Results showed that even light smoking is linked to an elevated risk of RA. **The risk increases more than twofold when a person smokes 1 to 7 cigarettes each day.**

After comparing the people who had never smoked to women who had smoked for up to 25 years, the team discovered that length of smoking time also increases the probability of developing RA.

The likelihood of [rheumatoid arthritis](#) did decrease after a person [quit smoking](#), with the risk continuing to reduce over time, the experts said. The risk lowered by one-third 15 years after kicking the habit.

On the other hand, compared to those who had never smoked cigarettes, **this risk was still considerably higher 15 years after quitting.**

The authors said:

"Among the limitations of this study, is the fact that we only have data on women aged 54 to 89 years, and so we were unable to assess the risk of RA among younger women and men. Moreover, the number of individuals who quit smoking was fairly limited, leading to problems of power in the estimates."

Leading researcher Daniela Di Giuseppe concluded:

"Stopping smoking is important for many health reasons, including the increased risk of RA for smokers. But the clearly increased risk of developing RA, even many years after giving up, is another reason to stop smoking as soon as possible, and highlight the importance of persuading women not to start at all."

What is rheumatoid arthritis?

Rheumatoid arthritis, which is sometimes called rheumatoid disease, is a chronic, progressive and disabling autoimmune disease. It results in [inflammation](#) and pain in the joints, the tissue surrounding the joints, and other organs in the body.

Although the disease affects the joints in the hands and feet first, any joint in the human body can become affected. **Typically, RA patients have stiff joints and generally feel tired and unwell.**

People of any age can develop the disease, however, it is much more common after the age of 40. According to the Mayo Clinic, US, RA is two to three times more common in females than in males.

A recent study indicated that [several lifestyle factors and pre-existing conditions, such as smoking and having diabetes, can increase the risk of developing RA.](#)

A different study from earlier this year indicated [the risk of RA may decrease with routine exposure to the sun](#), especially ultraviolet B (UVB) rays.

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