

Study: Secondhand Smoke Ups Cancer Risk 18-32 Percent
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Two large studies identify the health risks that nonsmokers face when exposed to secondhand smoke, Health Day News reported Dec. 11.

Using data from studies conducted in Europe and the United States, researchers with the International Agency for Research on Cancer determined that nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke were 18 percent to 32 percent more likely to develop lung cancer than those not exposed to passive smoking.

Furthermore, the risk of lung cancer rises as the length of exposure increases, researchers said.

"We pooled the studies together to look at two things: ... long-term exposure, and to try to get out some of the other factors out, such as dietary and occupational factors," said lead researcher Paul Brennan. "What this study has been able to show clearly is the more exposed one is to passive smoke, the greater the lung-cancer risk."

The study, which involved 2,740 participants, including 1,263 nonsmoking lung-cancer patients, looked at secondhand exposure from a spouse, at work, and in social settings.

The research found that nonsmokers whose spouses smoked had an 18- to 23-percent increased risk of lung cancer, depending on the number of years they lived with the smoker.

Nonsmokers exposed to smoking in the workplace were 13 to 25 percent more likely to develop lung cancer, depending on the number of years they were exposed to a smoking environment.

In social settings, the risk of nonsmokers developing lung cancer increased between 17 and 26 percent.

David Phillips, a professor at England's Institute of Cancer Research, said that, "given that many millions of nonsmokers are exposed to passive smoking at work, the impact on public health is very significant."

The study's findings are published in the Dec. 10 issue of the International Journal of Cancer.