Kidney Cancer Claims Heavy Smokers More Quickly

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Cigarette-puffing nicotine addicts suffer from kidney cancer more often than those who avoid lighting up, according to a study published in the Journal of Clinical Oncology and reported by Reuters Health.

For the study, Duke University researchers examined data of 845 people who'd had kidney cancer surgery. A quarter of the patients had advanced disease (meaning the cancer had spread beyond the kidney).

Scientists found there was a 60 percent higher chance of finding late-stage cancer in smokers than nonsmokers (even after accounting for age and other outside factors). What's more, the kidney cancer rate increased the more often smokers lit up.

While heavy smokers suffered from more advanced cancer, the odds of developing a progressive form of the disease fell by 9 percent for every decade that former smokers kicked the habit. This data not only suggested that smoking increased the chances a tumor would form, but it also showed that puffing up a storm could fuel the cancer growth by suppressing the immune system, researchers explained.

"[Quitting smoking] can't bring you down to the risk of a nonsmoker, but it can get you almost there," said Thomas J. Polascik, MD, a Duke surgeon and lead study author.

This study reinforces earlier research that showed smokers have twice the risk of developing kidney cancer in addition to other health problems, said Alexander Parker, a kidney cancer expert at the Mayo Clinic.

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