Black Smokers Twice as Likely as White Peers to Get Heart Disease

But good news: Smokers who quit can lower their risk for coronary heart disease to a level similar to that of those who never smoked.

July 5, 2021 By Kate Ferguson

Findings show that African Americans start smoking at a younger age and fewer quit smoking compared with their white counterparts. However, research on the connection between smoking cigarettes and coronary heart disease (CHD) in this population group has lagged. Now, study results published in the Journal of the American Heart Association show that Black Americans who smoke are more likely than their white peers to experience an elevated risk for heart disease, reports the Harvard Medical School heart health blog.

For the study, researchers reviewed information from 4,432 people—with and without heart disease risk factors—who participated in the Jackson Heart Study. Scientists organized this investigation in 1998 to pinpoint heart disease liabilities among Black people and tracked more than 5,000 Black Americans from three counties in Jackson, Mississippi.

Unlike those who never smoked, individuals who currently smoked exhibited double the chance of developing CHD. In addition, these individuals experienced high levels of plaque buildup in the arteries that nourish the heart with blood.

Scientists also noted that those who formerly smoked did not face a rise in their risk for CHD. What's more, researchers believed that those who quit smoking achieved nearly the same level of heart disease risk as those who never started the unhealthy habit.

Cigarette smoking isn't the only habit that can affect cardiovascular health. To learn more about the effects of smoking marijuana on the heart, read "Can Smoking Marijuana Be Bad for Your Heart?"

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