Smoking and Smoking Cessation in Relation to Mortality in Women

by Larissa J. Lucas, MD and Pamela Jones, MA

En Español (Spanish Version)

The Nurse’s Health Study was originally started to investigate long-term contraceptive use in 1976. Since then the study has continued and provided valuable information about women’s health risks and behaviors. Every two years surveys about health and life habits, such as smoking, are collected from the 100,000 plus nurses participating in the study.

Researchers from Harvard School of Public Health wanted to determine if quitting smoking decreased the risk of death compared to those that continued to smoke. The data collected from the Nurse’s Health Study was published in the May edition of *JAMA*. The results suggested that quitting smoking can decrease the risk of death from smoking-related diseases.

About the Study

The study was a prospective cohort study that followed 104,519 nurses for 24 years. The nurses, aged 30-55 years, reported their smoking habits and health status over the full study period. The rates of deaths among the nurses were:

- 9.2% for nurses that never smoked
- 12.1% for past smokers
- 18.8% for current smokers

Follow up from surveys also indicated that smokers had an increase in deaths due to vascular disease, coronary heart disease, cerebrovascular disease, respiratory disease, COPD, lung cancer, colorectal cancer, and all smoking-related cancers (includes cervical and breast cancers).

How Does This Affect You?

Each year 400,000 people die from smoking-related diseases. If you currently smoke, quitting may reduce your risk of death from such diseases. If you are not currently smoking, don’t start. Smoking cessation is a challenge for many people, but there are several options to help you quit. If you’ve tried to quit, explore new methods and try again. Discuss your concerns and options with your doctor.

RESOURCES:

American Cancer Society
http://www.cancer.org/

Smokefree.gov
http://www.smokefree.gov/

REFERENCES:


Last reviewed June 2008 by Larissa J. Lucas, MD
Last Updated: 6/9/2008