



IF YOU CAN'T QUIT SMOKING, EXERCISE MAY STILL HELP

A new Spanish study has suggested that moderate to high levels of exercise may help slow lung function decline in smokers and decrease their risk of developing chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). COPD is a leading cause of death around the world and results from chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Over an eleven year period researchers examined the smoking history, physical activity and lung function of 6,800 participants, none of whom had COPD at the start of the trial. Over the duration of the study 928 participants, that's nearly 1 in 7, developed the lung disease.

The study found that moderate to high physical activity levels were linked to a 21 per cent reduction in potential new cases of COPD, a discovery which was attributed to the possibility that regular exercise can impede the production of inflammatory markers in the lungs, which are caused by smoking.

The authors, like most people, had previously believed that the only way to reduce the risk of developing COPD was to stop smoking entirely and to avoid passive smoke intake. The findings appear to offer at least some hope to individuals who have healthy intentions but just cannot manage to kick the habit. Although not necessarily common, it's an unfortunate fact that a percentage of gym-goers do smoke despite regularly attending fitness facilities and employing the services of personal trainers.

Researcher Dr Judith Garcia-Aymerich, from the Institute Municipal D'Investigacio Medica, Barcelona, said; 'The interaction between physical activity and smoking should be taken into account when projecting the future burden of this respiratory disease'.

Source: American Thoracic Society, 1 March 2007.

For more information –

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