

Asian men who smoke may have increased risk for hair loss

November 19 2007

Smoking may be associated with age-related hair loss among Asian men, according to a report in the November issue of *Archives of Dermatology*, one of the JAMA/Archives journals.

“Androgenetic alopecia, a hereditary androgen-dependent disorder, is characterized by progressive thinning of the scalp hair defined by various patterns,” the authors write as background information in the article. “It is the most common type of hair loss in men.” Although risk for the condition is largely genetic, some environmental factors also may play a role.

Lin-Hui Su, M.D., M.Sc., of the Far Eastern Memorial Hospital, and Tony Hsiu-Hsi Chen, D.D.S., Ph.D., of National Taiwan University, Taipei, surveyed 740 Taiwanese men age 40 to 91 (average age 65) in 2005. At an in-person interview, the men reported information about smoking, other risk factors for hair loss and if they had alopecia, the age at which they began losing their hair. Clinical classifications were used to assess their degree of hair loss, their height and weight were measured and blood samples were provided for analysis.

The men’s risk for hair loss increased with advancing age, but remained lower than the average risk among white men. “After controlling for age and family history, statistically significant positive associations were noted between moderate or severe androgenetic alopecia and smoking status, current cigarette smoking of 20 cigarettes or more per day and smoking intensity,” the authors write.

This association could be caused by several mechanisms, they note. Smoking may destroy hair follicles, damage the papilla that circulate blood and hormones to stimulate hair growth or increase production of the hormone estrogen, which may counter the effects of androgen.

Source: JAMA and Archives Journals

Citation: Asian men who smoke may have increased risk for hair loss (2007, November 19)
retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2007-11-asian-men-hair-loss.html>

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