

Smokers suffer more back pain

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Smokers suffer more chronic back pain. This was the result of the analysis of a questionnaire performed by Monique Zimmermann-Stenzel and her colleagues and published in the current edition of *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International* (Dtsch Arztebl Int, 2008; 105[24]: 441-8).

In 2003, the Robert Koch Institute interviewed more than 8000 private persons in the course of a telephone health survey (GsTel03). This included questions on social and demographic themes, as well as health and life style. On the basis of the collected data, the authors examined whether there was an association between smoking and chronic back pain.

Their evaluation showed that smokers or former smokers suffer chronic back pain much more often than do non-smokers. The number of years the subjects had been smoking or had smoked was decisive. Subjects who had consumed tobacco for more than 16 years had a two-fold greater probability of suffering chronic back pain than subjects who had smoked for less than 10 years.

The probability of back pain was further multiplied for subjects who had smoked for longer than 26 years. On the other hand, the frequency with which the subjects consumed tobacco and the quantities smoked did not play a role.

However, the authors pointed out that tobacco consumption does not necessarily cause chronic back pain. It is just as possible that people with chronic back pain smoke to alleviate the pain. The exact association

between smoking and back pain will have to be clarified in appropriate studies. These could offer additional possibilities to prevent chronic back pain or smoking motivated by this.

Study link: <http://www.aerzteblatt.de/v4/archiv/pdf.asp?id=60552>

Source: Deutsches Aerzteblatt International

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