

High-pressure jobs boost young women's heart disease risk

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High pressure jobs boost young women's risk of heart disease, finds a large study of female nurses published today in *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

Previous research has indicated a link between a demanding job and heart disease risk, but the findings have been largely confined to men.

The research team assessed the impact of work pressure and degree of personal influence in the workplace on the heart health of 12,116 [nurses](#), who were taking part in the Danish Nurse Cohort Study.

The nurses were all aged between 45 and 64 in 1993, when they were quizzed about their daily work pressures and personal influence, after which their health was then tracked for 15 years, using hospital records.

By 2008, 580 nurses had been admitted to hospital with ischaemic heart disease, which included 369 cases of [angina](#) and 138 heart attacks.

Nurses who indicated that their work pressures were a little too high were 25% more likely to have ischaemic heart disease as those who said their work pressures were manageable and appropriate.

But those who felt work pressures were much too high were almost 50% more likely to have ischaemic heart disease. After taking account of risk factors for heart disease, such as smoking and lifestyle, the risk fell to 35%, but still remained significant.

Poor job control in the workplace did not influence heart disease risk, while the amount of [physical activity](#) at work, which is known to affect health, had a small although significant impact.

When the findings were analysed by age, only the nurses under the age of 51 were at significant risk of heart disease.

In a separate analysis, the researchers looked at the impact of work pressures on the same group, but for just five years up to 1998.

Nurses who felt themselves to be moderately pressurised at work were 60% more likely to have ischaemic [heart disease](#) while those who said they faced excessive pressures at work were almost twice as likely to have it.

These findings held true even after taking account of other risk factors.

"It seems as if the effect of work pressure has a greater impact on younger nurses," say the authors. "This is in agreement with findings from previous studies looking at age specific effects in both men and women."

The lower risk among the older nurses may be due to other risk factors that become relatively more important with increasing age. Furthermore, vulnerable individuals may have [already] left work," they add.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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