

Smoking sharply increases risk of certain cancers of the immune system and bone marrow

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(Medical Xpress) -- Women who smoke increase their risk of developing certain cancers of the blood, immune system, and bone marrow new research shows today (Friday).

The study showed that the risks of Hodgkin's lymphoma and some bone marrow cancers were doubled in women who smoked about 20 cigarettes a day. The risks of other types of blood cancer were also increased among smokers, but to a lesser extent.

The large study, published in the British Journal of Cancer, looked at 1.3

million middle-aged women from the Million Women study, funded by Cancer Research UK and the Medical Research Council.

Over a 10 year period 9000 women in the study developed leukaemia, a cancer of the [immune system](#) or of the bone marrow. Over the 10 years, six in every 1000 women who never smoked developed one of these cancers, whereas the number was almost eight in every 1000 for smokers.

The results add to existing evidence on the impact [smoking](#) has on Hodgkin lymphoma, and sheds new light on the link with other types of lymphoma, leukaemia and cancers of the [bone marrow](#).

Professor Valerie Beral, one of the study authors and director of the Cancer Research UK Epidemiology Unit at Oxford University, said: “These results highlight yet again how important smoking is as a cause of cancer.

“Smoking raises the risk of many types of cancer, not just lung cancer, and also the risk of heart attack and stroke, which many people may not be aware of.”

A recent survey by Cancer Research UK of the UK public showed there is a shocking level of ignorance about smoking and cancer. While most people know that smoking causes cancers of the lung, mouth and throat, few are aware that tobacco is also linked to cancers of the liver, pancreas, bowel, kidney, cervix, and bladder.

This new research shows the significant impact smoking can have on blood cancers as well.

Sara Hiom, director of information at Cancer Research UK, said: “Smoking is by far the most important preventable risk factor for cancer

in the UK – it’s responsible for nearly a fifth of all new cancer cases and causes more than a quarter of all deaths from cancer in the UK.

“It’s never too late to stop smoking; you will reduce your risk of developing lung cancer and other serious diseases. Your GP or local pharmacy can advise you where to find your local NHS support services.”

Jean King, [Cancer](#) Research UK’s director of tobacco control, said: “This is yet another stark reminder of the dangers of smoking. There are only two options to eliminate the illnesses caused by smoking – and they are to help smokers quit and to stop young people from starting to smoke in the first place.

“Reducing the appeal of cigarettes is essential to prevent young people from starting to smoke and so plain packaging of tobacco is the vital next step we need to make. Replacing the slickly designed, brightly coloured cigarette packaging with packs of standard size, shape and colour will give millions of children one less reason to start smoking.

“With the consultation on the future of tobacco packaging closing today, we urge the government to respond as quickly as possible to stop another generation from becoming addicted to a product that will kill half of all long term smokers.”

More information: Kroll ME et al., Alcohol drinking, tobacco smoking and subtypes of haematological malignancy in the UK Million Women Study, *British Journal of Cancer*, (2012).

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Provided by Cancer Research UK

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