

Healthy neurotic? Being conscientious may help

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Photo courtesy: U.S. National Institutes of Health

Study found people with both personality traits had lower levels of inflammation.

(HealthDay)—Being both neurotic and conscientious may be good for your health.

That's the finding from University of Rochester Medical Center researchers investigating how psychosocial factors such as personality traits affect health.

Conscientiousness is characterized as being organized, responsible and hardworking.

[Neuroticism](#) is typically marked by being moody, nervous and a worrier, and is linked to hostility, depression, and excessive drinking and smoking.

But this study of more than 1,000 people found that those with moderate to high levels of both neuroticism and conscientiousness tended to have the lowest levels of a type of [protein molecule](#) called [interleukin 6](#) (IL-6).

High levels of IL-6 indicate the presence of inflammation linked to chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, asthma, arthritis, diabetes and some cancers.

These neurotic yet conscientious people also had lower [body mass index](#) scores—a measure of body fat—and fewer diagnosed [chronic health conditions](#), according to the study published online recently in the journal *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*.

"These people are likely to weigh the consequences of their actions, and therefore their level of neuroticism coupled with conscientiousness probably stops them from engaging in risky behaviors," study author Nicholas Turiano, a postdoctoral fellow in the psychiatry department, said in a university news release.

It's likely that the combination of neuroticism and conscientiousness also compels people to seek treatment when they have health problems, he added.

"Future studies will try to figure out who are the healthy neurotics and why they are healthier," Turiano said. "Eventually, the clinical application might allow us to identify patients at high risk for [chronic inflammation](#), and therefore have an increased risk of health problems and death."

While the study found an association between certain personality traits and health status, it did not prove a cause-and-effect relationship.

More information: The American Heart Association has more about [inflammation and heart disease](#).

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