

Research find links between lifestyle and developing rheumatoid arthritis

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Researchers in Manchester have found a link between several lifestyle factors and pre-existing conditions, including smoking cigarettes and diabetes, and an increased risk of developing rheumatoid arthritis.

[Rheumatoid Arthritis](#) (RA) is a chronic disease which affects around 0.8% of the population; and its causes are of great interest to the medical world. Research led by Professor Ian Bruce, NIHR Senior Investigator and Professor of Rheumatology at The University of Manchester and consultant at Central Manchester University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, looked into the association between lifestyle factors and the risk of developing RA.

The research group at the Arthritis Research UK Epidemiology, which is part of the National Institute of [Health Research](#) Manchester Musculoskeletal [Biomedical Research](#) Unit, looked at a sample of over 25,000 people, aged 40-79 years old who have been followed over a number of years to discover if [lifestyle factors](#) had an affect on developing the disease.

When they compared 184 participants who went on to develop arthritis to those who did not, they found that smoking, obesity and having diabetes all increased the risk. It was also found that drinking a small amount of alcohol and being in a higher social class were associated with a reduced risk of developing the disease.

The study, funded by Arthritis Research UK, also examined gender

specific factors and found women who had more than two children and [breastfed](#) for a shorter amount of time also had a higher risk of developing RA.

The research team also conclude that this information could be used to develop a simple [screening tool](#), used by GPs and primary care workers, to identify patients with a higher risk of developing RA who could be offered advice to reduce their risk.

Professor Ian Bruce said: "The factors we studied give us vital clues to the early events in the process that ends in someone developing RA. They are also simple to ask about and can be used as part of a prevention programme. Our new wave of funding from the Medical Research Council and National Institute of Health Research has allowed us to move forward to the next stage in our attempt to prevent the development of this distressing condition."

Provided by University of Manchester

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