

Number of nurses who smoke is down, report says

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Researcher says trend is important because it sends clear message to patients about quitting.

(HealthDay)—The number of registered nurses in the United States who smoke fell by more than a third between 2003 and 2011, a new study shows.

Researchers examined data collected from health professionals across the country and found no significant decline in [smoking](#) among registered [nurses](#) between 2003 and 2007, according to the findings, which were published recently in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

However, the number of registered nurses who smoked dropped from 11 percent in 2007 to 7 percent in 2011, the study found. That's an overall decrease of 36 percent, and nearly three times higher than the 13 percent decline in smoking among the [general population](#) during the same

period.

The data also revealed that the portion of nurses who smoked and quit was higher than in the general population—about 70 percent and 53 percent, respectively.

"This decline is so important, not just for the health status of nurses but also because studies continue to show that smoking by health care professionals sends a mixed message to patients," principal investigator Linda Sarna, a professor in the School of Nursing at the University of California, Los Angeles, said in a university news release.

"Nurses see every day the devastation smoking has on their patients," said Sarna, an oncology nurse. "Much has changed since the 1970s, when female nurses had higher smoker prevalence than women in the general population."

The researchers also found that smoking declined for all [health professionals](#) included in the study—physicians, [registered nurses](#), licensed practical nurses, pharmacists, respiratory therapists and dental hygienists. Doctors had the lowest rate of current smokers (2 percent), while licensed practical nurses had the highest rate (nearly one-quarter), according to the study.

The study also found that nearly 78 percent of [health care professionals](#) never started smoking, which is much higher than the 65 percent among the general population.

More information: The American Cancer Society offers a [guide to quitting smoking](#).

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