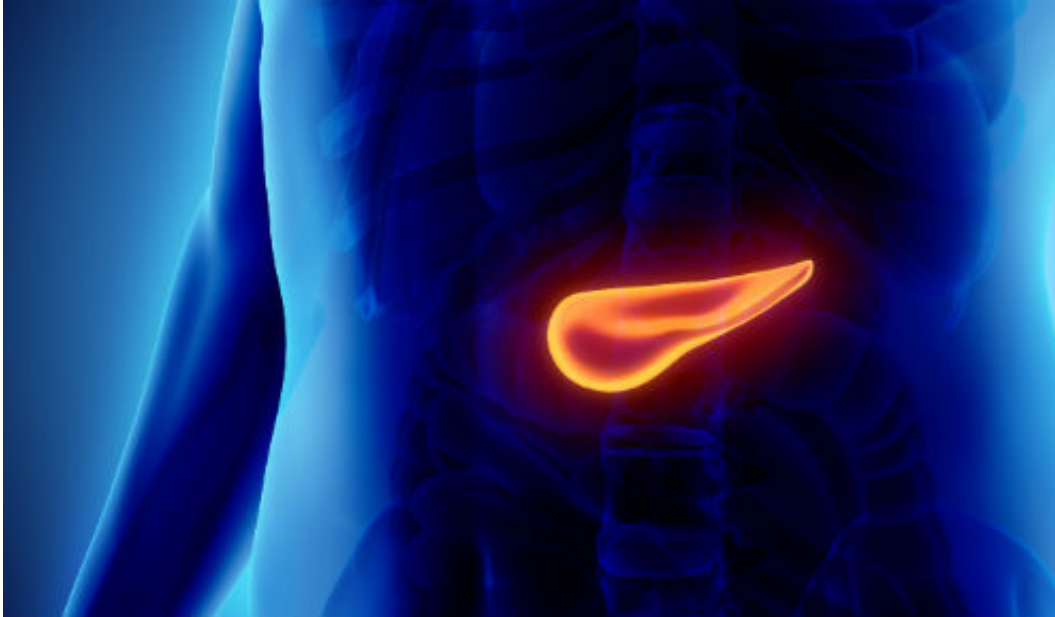


Blood fats equal risk of pancreatitis

November 8 2016



Credit: University of Copenhagen

New research from the University of Copenhagen shows that mild to moderate levels of blood fats equals an increased risk developing acute pancreatitis. It is far more serious than we previously believed it to be, according to the professor behind the study.

Pancreatitis is very painful and it may lead to fatalities. Until now, medical science has connected the risk of developing this illness to gallstone, a high intake of alcohol and very high concentrations of [blood fats](#). However, new research reveals that even mildly increased [levels](#) of blood fats is a risk factor. The latest study has involved more than

115,000 participants from Denmark, and the results have just been published in the *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

"We were surprised by the results, which show that even a mild to moderate rise in blood fats increases the risk of developing [acute pancreatitis](#). In fact, it turns out that the risk of developing pancreatitis is far greater than the risk of developing say, cardiovascular diseases," says medical student Simon Bo Pedersen from the University of Copenhagen and Herlev and Gentofte Hospital.

Far more serious than it was previously believed to be

Normal levels of blood fats would typically be 0-2 mmol per litre, while 2-10 is classified as a mild to moderate increase. If blood fat levels rise above 10 mmol per litre, it is considered a very high increase and previously, this was considered the risk factor to look for in relation to pancreatitis. However, this latest study shows that even a 2 mmol per litre increase significantly increases the risk of pancreas inflammation, and the risk is nine times higher with blood fat levels at 5-10 mmol per litre.

"It's far more serious than we previously believed it to be. Risk factors should therefore include a mild to moderate increase in blood fats, i.e. if a patient suddenly suffers e.g. severe stomach pains, which is a symptom related to acute pancreatitis, we should measure the patient's blood fats," says Professor Børge Nordestgaard from the University of Copenhagen and Herlev and Gentofte Hospital.

The need for more knowledge

Pancreatitis is a common disease. It affects 2-3,000 people in Denmark annually and the number is rising. The inflammation typically occurs

when cells in the pancreas discharge digestive enzymes, which then start to demolish the pancreas and damage the surrounding tissue.

"Until now, medical science has focused primarily on high blood cholesterol, but our study shows that we should also pay attention to more common fats. Mild to moderate levels of blood fats cause a lot more diseases than we have hitherto been aware of and we need much more research on this area. I know that currently studies are undertaken that investigate whether lowering the levels of blood fats also lowers the [risk](#) of developing cardiovascular diseases. I eagerly await the answer, because we need more knowledge," says Børge Nordestgaard.

Provided by University of Copenhagen

Citation: Blood fats equal risk of pancreatitis (2016, November 8) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-11-blood-fats-equal-pancreatitis.html>

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