

Lifestyle, stress may play role in heart rhythm disorder

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(HealthDay)—Stress and poor heart-health habits significantly increase the risk of a common heart rhythm disorder called atrial fibrillation, two preliminary studies suggest.

The irregular or quivering heartbeat associated with atrial fibrillation can lead to blood clots, stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications, the American Heart Association says.

One new study included more than 6,500 adults without heart disease. They were rated on seven factors related to heart health: smoking, [body mass index](#), physical activity, diet, total cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar. The heart association calls these Life's Simple 7.

Compared to those with the worst scores, adults who scored highest were 41 percent less likely to develop atrial fibrillation. Those with average scores were 8 percent less likely to develop the abnormal heartbeat.

Although the findings don't establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship, they suggest that promoting good heart health may prevent atrial fibrillation, said the researchers from Baptist Health South Florida in Miami.

The other study examined the link between stress and atrial fibrillation in more than 26,200 women. Sources of stress included work, family, finances, traumatic events (such as the death of a child), and neighborhood issues.

Women with atrial fibrillation had much higher financial, traumatic life-event and neighborhood stress scores than those without the condition. However, only [traumatic life events](#) were associated with [atrial fibrillation](#), according to the study.

The University of California, San Francisco researchers said further studies are needed to determine if stress-relieving measures can reduce the risk of the [heart rhythm disorder](#).

Both studies were presented this week at the American Heart

Association's annual meeting, in New Orleans. The results should be considered preliminary until peer-reviewed for publication in a medical journal.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more on [atrial fibrillation](#).

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