

Secondhand smoke linked to diabetes

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A U.S. study has found that people exposed to secondhand cigarette smoke have an increased risk of developing diabetes.

The 15-year study of 4,572 people supported earlier claims that smokers were more prone to developing glucose intolerance -- a forewarning of diabetes, the BBC reported Thursday.

The study, published in the British Medical Journal, suggests smoke toxins could affect the pancreas, which manufactures insulin, the hormone that regulates glucose in the blood.

Researchers at Alabama's Birmingham Veterans Affairs Medical Center found smokers -- defined as smoking at least five cigarettes a week for at least three months -- faced the highest risk, with 22 percent developing glucose intolerance over the 15-year period.

Seventeen percent of those who never smoked but had been exposed to secondhand smoke went on to develop glucose intolerance, as compared to 12 percent of people who had never been exposed to smoke.

The study said passive smokers are exposed to toxins like those of active smokers, but some toxins are even more concentrated in passive smoke. The study suggests if a toxin is linked to pancreas poisoning, it might explain the increased risk among passive smokers.

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