'Social' Smoking Can Be Lethal

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The percent of smokers that consistently smoke less than 10 cigarettes per day - called *social smoking*, is increasing. In the US, about 1 in 4 smokers fall into this group. Although this is a step in the right direction, some people may incorrectly think that smoking less protects them from lung cancer and lung disease. Pallavi Balte, PhD, and Elizabeth Oelsner, MD, MPH, at Columbia University Irving Medical Center believe that this is far from the truth. They found that social smokers are more than **twice as likely to die of lung disease** and more than **eight times as likely to die of lung cancer** than non-smokers.

The study followed 18,730 people from a sample of the US population and followed them for an average of 17 years. The researchers found that lung cancer and lung disease were consistently higher in social smokers than non-smokers. Additionally, rates of lung cancers in social smokers were 2/3 that of heavy smokers.

>The research reinforces the fact that no amount of smoking is “safe”. The best way to avoid lung disease is to quit all tobacco use. Balte and Oelsner plan to continue studying the effects of smoking and also investigate the current vaping epidemic.

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