

Subject: Pollution increases risk of heart attack: Study

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STOCKHOLM -- Long-term exposure to high levels of air pollution greatly increases the risk of suffering a heart attack, according to a new Swedish study to be presented this week.

"We have found that if you live in an area with high emission levels, compared to people who live in places with very low emission levels ... your chances of having a heart attack could be as much as 50 percent higher," Mats Rosenlund, an associate professor at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm who headed up the study, said on Tuesday.

The "Environmental factors in cardiovascular disease" study, which will be presented in Stockholm on Friday, is based on a country-wide case-control study comprising 2246 cases of myocardial infarction and 3206 population controls between 1992 and 1994.

"We have taken into consideration factors like smoking and diet to show air pollution's role" in provoking heart attacks, Rosenlund said, pointing out however that noise pollution may also have been a contributing factor.

The study also concluded that passive smoking "clearly increases the risk of heart attack", Rosenlund said.

He added however that people who had been exposed to passive smoke at home or at work but who changed their environment, appeared to return to normal risk levels within six to seven years.

A separate part of the study, based on a poll of 15,000 Swedes in 1997, meanwhile concluded that living near an airport can dramatically increase the chance of high blood pressure.

"There is a fairly strong connection between living close to an airport

and high blood pressure. The closer people live to (Stockholm's airport) Arlanda, the more likely it was for them to suffer from high blood pressure," Rosenlund said. -- AFP

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