[IMAGE]

Clock Out Before Your Heart Does

By Editorial Staff

Working longer and longer hours these days? It could hurt your heart, suggests research published in the *European Heart Journal*. In fact, working too much on a weekly basis may elevate your risk of developing what's known as atrial fibrillation – essentially an irregular, rapid heartbeat – which could increase the risk of blood clots, heart disease and stroke.

Researchers tracked the work habits of more than 85,000 men and women for 10 years. Average age of the study participants was 43 years at the start of the study, and none of the participants had atrial fibrillation at the outset. However, during the 10-year study period, workers who put in at least 55 hours a week on the job were a whopping 40 percent more likely to develop atrial fibrillation compared to workers who stayed in the 35-40 hour range per week.

office meal - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark Interestingly, only 10 percent of workers diagnosed with atrial fibrillation during the study had been diagnosed with heart disease prior to the fibrillation diagnosis. The study authors emphasize this finding means working long hours may independently increase the risk for atrial fibrillation, rather than it being a consequence of a pre-existing heart condition. However, they also note that workload in general (and how the individual worker is able to handle that workload) may be as significant as the total number of hours worked.

We all stay on the clock sometimes when our heads tell us to shut it down and go home. Our hearts may be telling us the same thing, and it's time to listen! Talk to your doctor for more information about how to keep your heart healthy and the risks associated with working too much (and playing too little).

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