

[IMAGE]

## **Workplace Exercise Plus Job Stress: A Bad Combination?**

So, exercise is always a good thing, right? Not necessarily. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Medicine* indicates that people who get the most on-the-job exercise also tend to suffer the most job stress - a combination that could lead to an increased risk for heart attack.

Researchers followed the physical activity of 500 middle-aged employees while monitoring the progression of their atherosclerosis (buildup of fatty tissue along the inner lining of artery walls), a condition that can lead to heart disease and life-threatening heart attacks and strokes. Interestingly, although atherosclerosis progressed more slowly in those who exercised more in their leisure time, the condition progressed faster among those who were physically active at work. According to James Dwyer, PhD, "Atherosclerosis progressed significantly faster in people with greater stress, and people who were under more stress also were the ones who exercised more in their jobs."

However, when the workers were grouped based on work stress alone, the connection between physical activity and atherosclerosis disappeared, suggesting that the problem is actually due to stress, not exercise; this means that the physical benefits of exercise with regard to hardening of the arteries may be ineffective when the exercise is combined with a stressful job environment. Of course, it also reinforces the fact that physical exercise can play an important role in keeping the heart healthy and free of disease.

So, what does this mean for people who have physically demanding jobs that are also major sources of stress? Exercise outside of work, too! The study also found that the progression of atherosclerosis slowed in those whose level of physical activity increased during leisure time. To learn more about the benefits of consistent, moderate exercise, go to [www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/sports](http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/sports).

### *Reference:*

Dwyer J, Nordstrom CK, Dwyer KM, et al. Leisure time physical activity and early atherosclerosis: the Los Angeles Atherosclerosis Study. *American Journal of Medicine* July 2003: Volume 115, Number 1, pp.19-25.

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