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# Even thinking of stress can make you sick

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Researchers have found just thinking about being stressed can make individuals fall seriously ill and even increase the chance of suffering a heart attack.

It was found, while following more than 7,000 civil servants over a period of up to 18 years, how the increased perception of stress almost doubled the risk of suffering a heart attack.

This is the first time a link has been discovered between heart disease and people's own view on how stress is affecting their health.

It suggests the doctors should take a patients' perspective into account when managing stress-related complaints.

It could also mean that helping patients to unwind can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Participants, who had an average age of 49.5, were asked to what extent they felt day-to-day stress had affected their health. Besides taking their medical background into account, they were also asked about personal lifestyle factors such as smoking, alcohol consumption, diet, and exercise.

Lead author Hermann Nabi, from the Inserm medical research institute in Villejuif, France, said: "We found that the association we observed between an individual's perception of the impact of stress on their health and their risk of a heart attack was independent of biological factors, unhealthy behaviours and other psychological factors. "One of the important messages from our findings is that people's perceptions about the impact of stress on their health are likely to be correct."

Heart disease is no longer restricted to the middle-aged and the old. Long working hours at the desk, little physical exercise and unhealthy eating habits are also taking a toll on working professionals in their late twenties and early thirties, experts say.

According to the India Today-Saffolalife Study conducted on 46,000 urban Indians, 78 per cent of those aged between 30 and 34 run the risk of a heart attack, **Kanchan Naikawadi, Director, Indus Health Plus (P) Ltd.** said.

There is no specific profession that leads to a higher number of heart diseases, but professionals who tend to sit for most of the time are more likely to suffer from such diseases, informs Naikawadi.

"Those from the IT and BPO sector fall under this category. With most of the work happening from desk and minimal physical activity being involved, the chances of risk in such professions are higher," Naikawadi said.

Although every profession contributes to stress, employees of IT companies are more stressed out owing to long working hours, graveyard shifts and unhealthy eating habits.

There are other unhealthy lifestyle practices that cause early heart attacks.



## About the author

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