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Smoking can worsen multiple sclerosis

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BUFFALO, N.Y., Aug. 18 (UPI) -- People with multiple sclerosis who smoked -- as little as six months -- experienced more brain shrinkage than those who never smoked, U.S. researchers said.

The study, published in *Neurology*, showed "ever-smokers" had more brain lesions and greater loss of brain volume, as well as higher scores on the Expanded Disability Status Scale than MS patients who had no history of smoking

First author Dr. Robert Zivadinov of the University at Buffalo said the study involved 368 patients, 128 had a history of smoking: 96 were active smokers who had smoked more than 10 cigarettes-per-day prior to the study and 32 were former smokers who had smoked at least six months in their lifetime. The remaining 240 were lifelong non-smokers.

Zivadinov said the findings showed smokers with MS had nearly 17 percent more brain lesions -- patches of inflammation in the sheath surrounding the nerve fibers that impair function -- than non-smokers with MS, and also had less brain volume.

Smoking also was associated with increased physical disability, as measured by the EDSS score.

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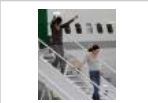
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