TuSalud

Can Regular Baths Reduce Heart Disease Risk?

A daily hot bath may help prevent cardiovascular disease and stroke.

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Baths have been proved to boost individuals' sleep quality and perception of their health. Now, new findings published in the journal Heart suggest that a good soak may also lower an individual's risk of dying of heart disease and stroke, reports BMJ Newsroom.

For the study, researchers investigated the link between the bathing habits and cardiovascular disease risk of 30,076 Japanese adults ages 40 to 59 with no history of heart disease. These participants were a part of a larger population-based tracking investigation and answered a detailed questionnaire about their tub bathing habits and potentially influential factors such as exercise, diet, average sleep duration and medical history. Participants were followed from 1990 to 2019.

Individuals were split into groups based on their bathing frequency: zero to two times per week, three to four times per week and almost every day. During the period of inquiry, there were 2,097 occurrences of cardiovascular illnesses—275 heart attacks, 53 sudden cardiac deaths and 1,769 strokes.

After accounting for several factors, researchers noted that a daily hot bath was associated with a 28% lower overall risk of cardiovascular disease and a 26% lower risk of stroke compared with a once or twice weekly bath or no bath at all. When scientists assessed the possible effects of water temperature, findings revealed there was a 26% lower and 35% lower risk of overall cardiovascular disease for warm and hot water, respectively. (No significant links were found between overall stroke risk and water temperature.)

In addition, taking frequent baths wasn't associated with a heightened risk of sudden cardiac death or a type of stroke called subarachnoid hemorrhage (bleeding into the space surrounding the brain).

Because this was an observational study, researchers weren't able to establish a cause for their findings. But scientists noted that past studies show a link between heat exposure and cardiovascular disease prevention.

What's more, this study's findings showed that frequent baths were significantly associated with a reduced risk of hypertension, which researchers believe may have factored into the lowered cardiovascular disease risk. (High blood pressure can lead to heart failure, stroke and heart attack, among many other health problems.)

However, researchers warned about the potential dangers associated with taking hot baths. Water that is too hot can raise body temperature and may cause burns and heat stroke.

"Investigations into the potential cardiovascular benefit of head-free immersion in warm to hot water are needed," said Andrew Felix Burden, a doctor from Exeter, United Kingdom, in an accompanying editorial. "In the meantime, caution is needed because of the high mortality associated with such bathing in an unselected population."

For related coverage, read "Can Good Oral Hygiene Thwart Heart Problems?" and "Can an Occasional Nap Keep Heart Problems Away?"

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