

# ASSOCIATION OF HEALTH CHRISTIAN PROFESSIONALS NEWSLETTER

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## Vulnerability To Stress May Increase Risk Of Heart Disease, Study Finds



In the latest research showing just how important the *handling* of stress is, a new study shows that having a stress-prone personality could seriously up your risk for heart disease.

The new research, conducted in a [large Danish population](#), found that people who are "mentally vulnerable" -- meaning they are more susceptible to stress -- are at a significantly higher risk for both fatal and non-fatal heart events. The

study's findings were presented on April 18 in Rome at the EuroPrevent 2013 congress.

Researchers measured "mental vulnerability" on a 12-point scale, looking at mental and physical symptoms that measured an individual's level of stress, and determined whether they had a personality that was more prone to getting stressed-out. A [statistical analysis](#) of nearly 11,000 individuals showed that mental vulnerability was correlated with cardiovascular events, both fatal and non-fatal, independently of normal risk factors like smoking, cholesterol and age.

The researchers followed the Danish cohort, which consisted of 10,943 individuals initially free of heart disease, for nearly 16 years. Just over 3,000 fatal and non-fatal cardiovascular events were recorded during the follow-up analysis, and the data showed that the risk of cardiovascular events in the mentally vulnerable was [36 percent higher](#) than in the non-vulnerable, independently of other risk factors.

"So mental vulnerability might describe a 'new dimension' when compared to the five classical risk factors, but to take this forward we need to identify sub-groups of the population where mental vulnerability does improve risk prediction beyond the classic risk factors," [one of the study authors, Dr. Anders Borglykke, of the Research Centre for Prevention and Health at Glostrup University Hospital, said in a statement.](#)

Although previous studies have linked personality traits with cardiovascular disease and mortality, their role in predicting risk wasn't clear. For instance, a [2006 Duke University study](#) found that regular anxiety, depression and hostility increase a person's risk of developing coronary heart disease, and that the combination of these negative emotions could significantly increase that risk. Research has also found that those with [Type A personalities](#) -- characterized by being competitive, impatient, ambitious and uptight -- are at a higher risk for heart disease, although [one study](#) found this to be untrue.

But personality type isn't the only stress-related risk factor for cardiovascular events. A [2012 review of studies](#) also showed that excessive work stress could increase the risk of heart attack: Those with demanding jobs were found to have a 23 percent higher risk of suffering from heart attack.