

## Eating fried fish likely factor in strokes, study finds

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Researchers at Emory University's School of Medicine are pointing a finger at fried fish as a key contributor in the cause of strokes in Americans living in the Southeastern part of the United States.

A study published in the Dec. 22 online issue of the journal *Neurology* finds people living in states commonly called the stroke belt eat more fried fish than people living in the rest of the country.

The stroke belt includes Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, as previous studies have shown people living in this region are more likely to die from a stroke than people living in other parts of the [United States](#). Blacks are more affected than whites.

The study's author, an Emory neurologist, says the type of fish is just as important as the preference to eating the fish when cooked fried.

"While all fish contain healthy omega-3 acids, the amount of these essential nutrients varies depending on the type of fish and the cooking methods," says Fadi Nahab, MD, an assistant professor of neurology in Emory University School of Medicine and medical director of the stroke program at Emory University Hospital.

Previous studies have shown that the omega-3 fatty acids in fish, especially fatty fish such as salmon, herring and mackerel, may reduce the risk of stroke, and the American Heart Association recommends that people eat fish at least two times per week with an emphasis on fatty fish.

Nahab and his fellow researchers used existing data obtained from more than 21,000 people participating in the Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) project sponsored by the National Institutes of Health. [regardsstudy.org](http://regardsstudy.org)

### **Study Details:**

- Researchers assessed data from 21,675 people across the United States participating in the REGARDS study between Jan. 2003 and Oct. 2007. Participants were age 45 or older, with an average age of 65.
- Twenty-one percent of participants were from the "stroke buckle" - the coastal plain region of North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia where stroke mortality rates are even higher than in the rest of the stroke belt. Thirty-four percent were from the rest of the stroke belt and 44 percent were from the other 40 contiguous states.
- Participants were interviewed by phone and then given an in-home

physical examination. They answered questions about how often they ate oysters, shellfish, tuna, fried fish and other fish not fried.

- Fewer than one in four study participants consumed two or more servings of non-fried fish per week. Those in the stroke buckle were 11 percent less likely to meet the recommendations than those in the rest of the country. Those in the rest of the stroke belt were 17 percent less likely than those in the rest of the country.
- Blacks were more than three-and-a-half times more likely to eat two or more servings of fried fish per week than whites, with an overall average of 0.96 servings per week of fried fish for blacks compared to 0.47 servings for whites. Those in the stroke belt were 32 percent more likely to eat two or more servings of fried fish than those in the rest of the country. People in the stroke buckle were 17 percent more likely to eat two or more servings of fried fish.
- Overall, those in the stroke belt ate an average of 0.68 servings of [fried fish](#) per week, compared to 0.64 in the stroke buckle and 0.62 in the rest of the country. For non-fried fish, those in the [stroke belt](#) ate an average of 1.45 servings per week, compared to 1.52 servings in the [stroke buckle](#) and 1.63 servings in the rest of the country.

Provided by Emory University

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