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Taking NSAIDs, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, on a regular basis could give smokers (both former and current) a chemoprotective benefit, according to Dr. Joshua E. Muscat, of the American Health Foundation.

Muscat's team found that NSAIDs inhibit the development of lung tumors, in their study, which included 1038 patients and 1002 controls.

NSAIDs were used regularly by 17% of patients and 21% of the study controls. "The relative risk estimate of lung carcinoma associated with using NSAIDs 3 times a week or more for 1 or more years demonstrated an odds ratio (OR) of 0.68," the investigators calculate. The relationships between lung cancer and NSAID use varied depending on smoking status.

"If the current findings do reflect a chemoprotective effect, it is uncertain why the inverse association was limited to smokers," Dr. Muscat commented. "It is possible that smoking might induce COX-2 expression."

"The possibility that commonly used pain medication can reduce (lung cancer) rates should be explored further," concluded the study researchers.