

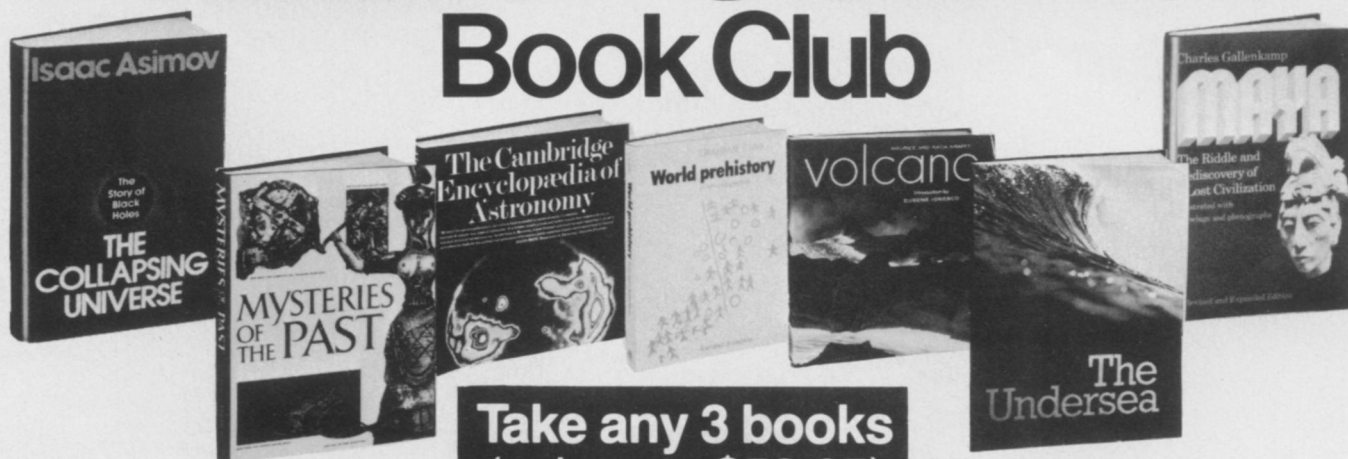
science news

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Alton Ochsner, M.D.:

HOW TO CUT ONE'S RISK OF DYING FROM HEART DISEASE OR A STROKE

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: *Alton Ochsner, M.D., is one of our outstanding international leaders in modern medical progress. Now Emeritus Professor of Surgery at Tulane University School of Medicine, he maintains an active practice at the famed Ochsner Clinic in New Orleans. As a member of our Editorial Board, we have asked him out of his long experience to explain a too-little understood hazard of smoking . . . in fact, a much greater risk than from lung cancer.*

—Richard Stanton

The annual death toll from cardiovascular disease remains tremendous. It is the most frequent cause of death in the United States. Death at any time is tragic but when it strikes a relatively young person in the prime of life and at the height of his career, it is particularly devastating.

Many factors (such as hypertension, diabetes, marked obesity, sedentary living, and smoking) increase the risk of developing coronary heart disease. Of these, smoking is by far the most important.

Borhani et al⁽¹⁾ studied the effects of smoking on longshoremen in San Francisco for a ten-year period. They found not only that the death rate from coronary artery disease was higher among smokers than among non-

smokers, but even more important, the higher death rates occurred in younger men at the time of their greatest productivity. Among the men 45 to 54 years of age, the death rate was 3.3 times higher in smokers than in nonsmokers and in those 55 to 64 years of age it was 4.8 times greater in the smoking group. In those surviving to 65 to 74 years of age, interestingly it was just under two times greater in the smokers.

Hammond,⁽²⁾ studying the life expectancy of 447,196 men born between 1896 and 1927 and still living July 1, 1960, found that the percentages of men aged 25 expected to die before 65 were as follows: nonsmokers 22%; smokers of 1 to 9 cigarettes daily 37%; 20 to 39, 39%; and over 40, 46%. Thus, more than three times as many men, aged 25, who smoke over 40

1. Borhani NO, Hechter HH, Breslow L: Report of a ten-year follow-up study of the San Francisco longshoremen: Mortality from coronary heart disease and from all causes. *J Chronic Dis* 16:1251-1266, 1963.

2. Hammond EC: Life expectancy of American men in relation to their smoking habits. *J Natl Can Inst* 43:951-962, 1969.

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