

Biking on busy streets linked to heart risks

Brett Israel, Environmental Health News

When Ed Campaniello chooses his biking route between his Mission District home and job in downtown San Francisco, traffic is a top consideration.

And new research shows that's a smart move – not only because fewer cars mean less of a chance of being hit, but because polluting vehicles may give cyclists heart problems.

The 42-year-old solar energy consultant said it makes sense. Occasionally, he gets a funky taste in his mouth after riding behind trucks and buses.

“I consider bicycling part of what keeps me healthy,” he said. “But the benefits might be mitigated by the greater level of pollutants I’m being exposed to.”

A new study published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* showed a link between biking in heavy traffic and heart health risks, with cyclists having heart irregularities in the hours after their exposure to a variety of air pollutants on busy roads.

Canadian study

The study by scientists from Health Canada, Environment Canada and the University of Ottawa does not suggest that bikers would be better off driving. Rather, the findings intensify the scrutiny on cyclists' pollution exposure and point to simple solutions for a cleaner ride, such as avoiding busy roads whenever possible.

For the study, 42 healthy, nonsmoking cyclists in Ontario wore heart monitors before, during and after cycling for one hour

on congested and uncongested roads. Instruments on the bikes measured exposure to air pollution.

Read the whole story