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Title: Incidence of chronic bronchitis: A prospective study in a large general population  

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Body: Background: There are few studies on incidence of chronic bronchitis (CB) in general populations. Aims and objectives: The present prospective study in a large general population sample aimed to investigate the incidence rate of chronic bronchitis (CB) in relation to age, atopy, gender and smoking. Methods: A random sample of individuals living in a county in Western Sweden participated in a study 1993 and answered a short questionnaire. They were mailed a new respiratory questionnaire in 2003. 11,463 (72%) answered the questionnaire, which also comprised an item about age when symptoms of CB started. CB was defined as chronic productive cough of at least 3 months a year for 2 consecutive years. Cox regression analyses were performed with incident CB as an event and person-years under observation as the dependent variable. Mutual adjustments were made for age, atopy, gender and smoking. Hazard ratios were calculated for the explanatory variables. Results: The 11,463 subjects were born 1943-1973 and 98 of them developed CB during the study period (1993-2003). The incidence rate was 0.9/1,000 person-years, and was increased in relation to smoking (HR 2.2, 95% CI (1.5-3.3)) and atopy (HR 1.6 95% CI (1.0-2.5)). The incidence rate of CB did not differ significantly between women and men or between different age groups. Conclusions: An incidence rate of 0.9/1,000 person-years for CB was found in this large prospective general population-based study. Smoking and atopy were both associated with an increased risk of CB.