

Prevention of Atherosclerosis

From atherosclerosis to development of coronary heart disease, it usually takes 10 to 20 years. Some patients develop atherosclerosis in their teens or 20s. During the latent period, there may be no symptoms. Heart attack may strike suddenly leading to cardiac arrest and sudden death. Hence, prevention is very important. As there are many risk factors, preventive measures should not target only on a few factors but should include all.

Cigarette Smoking

Smokers have a higher incidence and risk of dying from coronary artery disease than non-smokers. Filter cigarettes made little impact on the risk of cardiovascular disease. Inhalation of second-hand smoke is equally dangerous and should be avoided. Smokers who quit tobacco reduce their excess risk by half after stop smoking for one or two years. For chronic heavy smokers, nicotine-containing chewing gum or transdermal pads may be helpful.

Diet

"Good diet" affects some known risk factor of coronary artery disease. High caloric diet and those rich in cholesterol are more prone to increase serum cholesterol level, increasing the incidence of coronary artery disease. High intake of dietary fiber reduces the rate of coronary artery disease.

Weight Reduction

Obesity is a risk factor of coronary artery disease, and it often occurs in association with other major risk factors, e.g. hypertension, diabetes mellitus. The goal of weight reduction is to reduce 1-2 pounds per week.

Exercise

Exercise improves people's well being and functional capacity. It can lower triglyceride and LDL cholesterol, and elevate HDL cholesterol. Regular exercise reduces the chance of cardiovascular disease and hypertension.

In conclusion, we must first maintain a balanced diet. Reduce fat and cholesterol consumption and eat more food that contains fiber. We must also have adequate exercise, learn to handle stress and pressure, remain mentally healthy, and do not smoke. Of course, a regular check up to detect early problems will be most important.