Atherosclerosis caused by aging and an unhealthy regime and lifestyle

Health & Medicine

Atherosclerosis is a health disorder that is characterized by the hardening of the arteries. In normal circumstances, Atherosclerosis is caused by aging. This occurs when plaque builds up in the arteries over time, making them narrow and stiff. The narrowing of the arteries blocks blood circulation in the body, and consequently prevents body tissues from receiving adequate blood and oxygen. This condition is the major cause of strokes, heart attacks, and other cardiovascular diseases. Atherosclerosis is also hereditary, and can affect one if it is common in their family. However, other than aging and family history, Atherosclerosis can also develop early in life as a result of unhealthy eating habits. For instance, the consumption of fatty foods can lead to the accumulation of cholesterol in the blood vessels, which in turn causes the arteries to harden and hinder free blood circulation. Accordingly, since one's lifestyle is a major factor in the development of this disorder, the causes of Atherosclerosis and ways of preventing it should be observed.

One of the major causes of Atherosclerosis at a younger age is the over-accumulation of cholesterol in the blood vessels. Arteries, the blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood to the heart and other parts of the body, are lined from the inside by the endothelium, a thin layer that keeps the walls of the arteries smooth and, therefore, suitable for the free flow of blood (Nordqvist 2012). Unhealthy lifestyle habits such as smoking and consumption of fatty foods damage the arteries' endothelium lining, making them vulnerable to invasion by cholesterol. Over time, cholesterol accumulates on the walls of the arteries to form plaque, a sold substance that hardens and narrows them. Richard Stein, MD, the National Spokesperson for the American Heart Association (AHA) states that plaque is

" a jumble of lipids, or cholesterol, cells, and debris, and it creates a bump on the artery wall" (Irving 91). On its part, smoking accelerates the accumulation of smoke and nicotine, which causes plaque (McConnell 279). As the accumulation of plaque continues, the bump gets bigger, growing to a point where it can cause blockage for blood circulation. It is this accumulation of plaque and the subsequent narrowing of the arteries that causes the condition known as Atherosclerosis. A severe narrowing of the arteries chokes off blood circulation, which usually causes chest pain. In worst cases, the plaque can rapture and allow blood clotting to take place inside the arteries. If the rapture occurs in the heart, it causes heart attacks, while rapture in the brain causes a stroke.

Lack of physical exercise is another factor that causes Atherosclerosis. Physical exercise is necessary to enhance adequate removal of extra fats and harmful cholesterol from the body (Dept. of Health and Human Services 110). It leads to obesity and overweight as well as allows fats and cholesterol to accumulate in the arteries.

In this regard, Atherosclerosis can be prevented by observing healthy eating habits and regular exercising. It is recommended to avoid foods rich in fats since they are the major source of cholesterol. Similarly, smoking should be limited, because it allows the accumulation of plaque from nicotine and smoke sediments. Physical exercising helps the body to break down extra fats, thus reducing chances of cholesterol accumulation. In addition, exercising facilitates blood circulation, which reduces chances of the arteries narrowing.

In conclusion, Atherosclerosis is normally an aging-related condition characterized by the narrowing of the arteries and accumulation of cholesterol. It is also hereditary and can be inherited within the family. However, it is commonly associated with leading an unhealthy lifestyle such as smoking, eating fatty foods and lack of physical exercising. Accordingly, Atherosclerosis can be prevented by adopting a healthy regiment that involves consumption of low-fat foods, avoiding smoking and being physically active.