

Atherosclerosis

It happens because of the buildup of fat, cholesterol, and other substances in the arterial wall, which can cause narrowing the vessel lumen and decreasing the blood flow. Arteries are blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood to your heart and other parts of your body.

Arteriosclerosis often leads to serious heart problems; it can also affect arteries anywhere in your body.

It can also be called **Arteriosclerosis**

Symptoms:

The most common symptoms of atherosclerosis include:

- Chest pain
- Pain in any of your limbs, where there may be a stenosis of peripheral artery
- Dizziness or even syncope, as a result of blood not flowing to your brain

But symptoms of arteriosclerosis depend on which arteries are affected. For example:



- **Arteriosclerosis in the heart arteries:** The symptoms include chest pain (angina).
- **Arteriosclerosis in the brain arteries:** The symptoms include sudden numbness or weakness in the area affected like the arms or legs, difficulty speaking or slurred speech, temporary loss of vision in one eye, or drooping muscles in the face. These symptoms signal a transient ischemic attack (TIA), which, if left untreated, may progress to a stroke.
- **Arteriosclerosis in the arteries of the arms and legs (peripheral artery disease):** The symptoms include leg pain when walking.
- **Arteriosclerosis in the kidney arteries:** It can lead to high blood pressure or kidney failure.

Causes:

Atherosclerosis is a slowly worsening disease that may begin as early as childhood. The exact cause is unknown. It may start with damage or injury to the inner layer of an artery.



Risk factors:

- Aging
- Medical history
- High blood cholesterol (hypercholesteremia)
- Lack of physical activity
- Unhealthy diet
- Insulin resistance
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Smoking

When you should visit the doctor?

- If you have a family history of any type of arteriosclerosis;
- If you experience early symptoms of inadequate blood flow to certain areas of the body (e.g. chest pain, leg pain, or numbness);
- If you suffer shortness of breath during routine day-to-day activities.



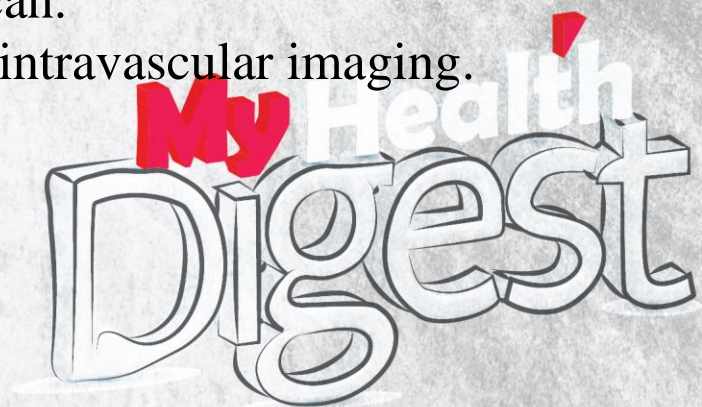
Complications of atherosclerosis:

- Coronary artery disease, which can cause chest pain, a heart attack, or heart failure;
- Carotid artery disease, which can cause a TIA or a stroke;
- Peripheral artery disease, which can cause tissue damage (gangrene);
- Aneurysms, which can occur anywhere in your body;
- Chronic kidney disease.

Diagnosis:

Early diagnosis and treatment can stop arteriosclerosis from getting worse, and prevent the complications. Arteriosclerosis can be diagnosed through:

- Medical history
- Family history
- Laboratory tests: blood tests
- Other tests, including: ultrasound, electrocardiogram (ECG), CT scan, and MRI scan.
- Cardiac catheterization with intravascular imaging.



Treatment:

Arteriosclerosis can basically be treated by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Sometimes, medication or surgical procedures may be prescribed as well.

Prevention:

- Adopting heart-healthy eating habits and avoiding foods that are high in sodium, added sugar, solid fats, and refined grains;
- Engaging in physical activity;
- Avoiding smoking;
- Managing your weight;
- Smoking cessation.

