Eradicating *H pylori* Could Help Prevent Atherosclerosis

Many studies have shown an association between *Helicobacter pylori* (HP) infection and atherosclerosis in coronary, carotid, or peripheral vessels. Endothelial dysfunction has been called the first step in the response-to-injury hypothesis of atherosclerosis—could eradicating HP improve endothelial dysfunction? Yes, say researchers from the University of Miami; Baruch Padeh Poria Medical Center, Lower Galilee, Israel; and Haifa (Israel) University. In fact, they found endothelial dysfunction was actually reversed in HP-positive patients, potentially reducing the risk of atherosclerosis and future cardiovascular events.

In the study, 31 patients with documented HP infection were treated with triple therapy (2 antibiotics and a proton pump inhibitor) for 10 days. Three months later, those patients and 11 HP-negative control subjects with dyspepsia were reevaluated with vascular tests, including flow-mediated diameter percent change and the ankle brachial index (ABI).

HP-positive patients had had severe endothelial dysfunction that improved significantly to normal values after HP eradication. By contrast, endothelial dysfunction in the HP-negative subjects did not change significantly. ABI was not affected by HP infection: Among the HP-positive patients, it was 1.2% both before and after HP eradication. Among HP-negative participants, ABI rose from 1.25% to 1.31%.

Data about inflammatory markers have been inconsistent, the researchers say. In their study, soluble interleukin-6 levels in serum were not elevated before or after treatment for HP. They suggest that one reason for the differences in findings could be that patients come for health care visits at different stages of inflammatory response.

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