

Atherosclerotic disease

Atherosclerosis (also known as arteriosclerotic vascular disease or ASVD) is a specific form of arteriosclerosis in which an artery wall thickens as a result of invasion and accumulation of white blood cells (WBCs).

Atherosclerotic disease of the [carotid artery](#) has a high prevalence in patients aged over 50 and is a major cause of [ischemic stroke](#).

The accumulation of the WBCs is termed “fatty streaks” early on because of appearance being similar to that of marbled steak. These accumulations contain both living, active WBCs (producing inflammation) and remnants of dead cells, including cholesterol and triglycerides. The remnants eventually include calcium and other crystallized materials, within the outer-most and oldest plaque. The “fatty streaks” reduce the elasticity of the artery walls. However, they do not affect blood flow for decades, because the artery muscular wall enlarges at the locations of plaque. The wall stiffening may eventually increase pulse pressure; widened pulse pressure is one possible result of advanced disease within the major arteries.

Atherosclerosis is therefore a syndrome affecting arterial blood vessels due to a chronic inflammatory response of WBCs in the walls of arteries. This is promoted by low-density lipoproteins (LDL, plasma proteins that carry cholesterol and triglycerides) without adequate removal of fats and cholesterol from the macrophages by functional high-density lipoproteins (HDL). It is commonly referred to as a “hardening” or furring of the arteries. It is caused by the formation of multiple atheromatous plaques within the arteries.

see [Intracranial atherosclerotic disease](#).

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