

Anger Linked to Heart Disease

Anger, Hostility, and Depression Tied to Inflammation, Heart Disease Risk

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Sept. 22, 2004 -- A bad attitude may put your heart at risk, regardless of how well you've got the other traditional heart disease risk factors under control, according to a new study.

Researchers found otherwise healthy people prone to anger, hostility, and depression have higher levels of a substance linked to narrowing of the arteries and future heart disease risk called C-reactive protein (CRP). This protein is released in the body in response to the inflammation caused by stress, infection, and other threats to the immune system.

Depression and anger have long been linked to a higher risk of heart disease, but experts say this is one of the first studies to provide proof of a possible mechanism behind the relationship.

Researchers say the findings show that these behavioral and psychological factors might help account for the 50% of heart attacks that occur among people without any of the traditional risk factors for heart disease.

"These psychological behaviors do have implications in determining health or the risk of disease that we have," says researcher Edward Suarez, PhD, associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Duke University Medical Center.