HIV Puts Men at Greater Risk of Heart Disease

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Men living with HIV are at greater risk of soft plaque buildup in arteries feeding the heart when compared with their uninfected peers, MedPage Today reports. Publishing their findings in the Annals of Internal Medicine, researchers studied 1,001 gay and bisexual men drawn from the Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study (MACS), including 618 who had HIV and 383 who did not.

The researchers detected plaque buildup in coronary arteries—a condition known as coronary atherosclerosis—in 63 percent of the HIV-positive study participants and 53 percent of the HIV-negative ones. After adjusting for various factors, they found that there was a significantly increased level of soft plaque and cumulative size of individual soft plaques in men with HIV when compared with HIV-negative men.

The investigators also deduced that for every decrease by 100 in the HIV-positive men's lowest-ever CD4 count, their risk of coronary artery blockage increased by 20 percent. Also, for every year the men took antiretrovirals to treat HIV, their risk of coronary artery blockage went up by 9 percent.

"These findings from the largest study of its kind tell us that men with HIV infection are at increased risk for the development of coronary artery disease and should discuss with a care provider the potential need for cardiovascular risk factor screening and appropriate risk reduction strategies," Gary H. Gibbons, MD, director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, said in a release.

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