

## VOA Special English Science Report

### TEST SHOWS HEART ATTACK RISK

This is Bill White with the VOA Special English Science Report.

American medical researchers say that a low-cost and easy blood test is the best way to tell if a person is likely to suffer a heart attack in the future.

The researchers did their work at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts. They used a test for a substance in the blood called C-reactive protein. The presence of this protein means that arteries are larger than normal, or inflamed.

C-reactive protein is produced naturally in the liver when there is inflammation somewhere in the body. A cold or bacterial infection is known to cause such inflammation. Researchers think inflammation also is involved in heart disease.

Scientists say two things cause a heart attack. First, a person's blood has a high level of a fatty substance called cholesterol. This kind of fat builds up and becomes hard inside arteries, the tubes that carry blood away from the heart. Then, the artery walls become inflamed.

Researchers say a heart attack happens when this inflammation causes the fatty substance to break off and block the flow of blood through the artery.

The Boston researchers reported their work in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. They tested blood taken from hundreds of healthy older women for levels of C-reactive

protein and 11 other substances. Three years later, they found that 122 of the women had suffered heart attacks or other heart problems. They compared these women with 244 women who had not suffered any heart problems.

They found that the women with the highest levels of C-reactive protein were more than four times more likely to have heart problems than women with the lowest levels. They also found that testing the level of cholesterol in the blood showed only two times the chance of suffering future heart problems.

Paul Ridker is a heart expert who led the study. He says doctors should continue to test their patients' cholesterol levels. But Dr. Ridker also says the new test should be added to health examinations for both men and women with increased risk of heart disease. He says doing tests for cholesterol and C-reactive protein will give better information about a person's chance of having a heart attack when there is still time to prevent it.

This VOA Special English Science Report was written by Nancy Steinbach. This is Bill White.

Source: Voice of America, 4/12/2000

Re-posted by eigozai  
No. 0120pdf (397 words)