Vaccine-Preventable Childhood Infections Might Raise Risk of Early Heart Attack

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Here's one more reason to vaccinate your kids: Childhood infections such as chicken pox, measles and tuberculosis may drastically raise a person's risk of a heart attack later in life, show new findings presented at the Acute Cardiovascular Care conference in Vienna and reported by Medical News Today.

For the study, researchers went to Indonesia, where typhoid fever, measles, chicken pox, bronchitis, tuberculosis and dengue fever are still quite common among children. The scientists conducted a population-based study of 153 people age 55 or younger who had experienced a heart attack (a.k.a. acute coronary syndrome, or ACS), and 153 people with no history of heart attack, who acted as controls.

Results from health history questionnaires given to both groups showed that subjects who said they experienced a "severe infection" during childhood or adolescence were three times more likely than those who didn't to suffer a heart attack later in life.

"One explanation is that infection initiates chronic inflammation and atherosclerosis in the arteries," said Andriany Qanitha, a PhD candidate at the Academic Medical Centre in the Netherlands, who presented the study. "It could be that infection modifies [cardiovascular disease] risk factors and leads to ACS."

But researchers said it's still unclear whether the findings can be applied to populations around the world. This is because, scientists noted, Indonesians live in a different environment and have a different lifestyle than people living in the United States.

For more information about the different types of cardiovascular disease, click here.

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