



**The Atherosclerosis Risk
in Communities (ARIC) Study**

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The Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) Study • Fall 2009

ARIC Invites you to a New Exam Visit

In this edition of the ARIC Newsletter we are able to share with you the exciting news of **another ARIC exam visit!** During our annual phone calls over the years, many of you asked about another exam at the ARIC center. Finally we are able to give you an answer, and it's yes. ARIC has been funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the NIH to conduct another examination.

This exam visit of the ARIC cohort at our center will focus on two very important areas of health research: our hearts and our brains. We will conduct state-of-the-art tests of how well your heart works, and of the ways the circulation of our blood helps our memory. We will also check your blood pressure, physical functioning, and do many of the blood tests a physician would order. As before, the results of these useful tests will be provided to you or the person you designate.

The ARIC investigators and staff are very pleased to have the opportunity to see you again at the ARIC center and to continue to work with you on this important research. We anticipate that it will take one year to prepare this examination, to get the equipment and study procedures in place so that your next ARIC visit will be as smooth as previous exams and its results of the same high quality. Following this planning phase we will

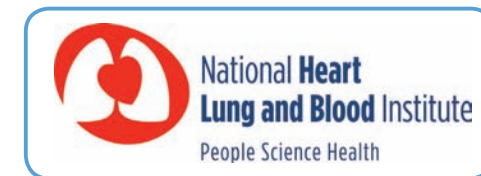
conduct the exam visit over two years.

We will keep you informed of our progress. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to call us at the number provided on the address page. In future issues of the ARIC Newsletter we will provide details of the exams and tests we will be able to offer and we will firm up the exam dates. Since

many of you travel or no longer live close to the ARIC center, it is important for us to plan ahead for exam visit dates that are convenient for you. Members of the

ARIC cohort who live in this community but find it difficult to come to the ARIC center may invite the ARIC staff to their place of residence to conduct a brief exam.

We look forward to seeing you at an ARIC center again soon!



Become Healthier Along with Washington County!

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

• **Living Well —Take Charge of Your Health!** A seven week educational workshop to help you cope with the day-to-day management of chronic conditions. Learn tips on how to communicate your health with the medical community and normalize your experience. Offered at various locations for the fee of \$35. Caregivers are welcome and scholarships are available. For more information or to register, call 301-790-8907.

• **Diabetes Support Group** Meetings are held every month on the second Wednesday at 1:30pm in the Potomac Towers or Walnut Towers Senior Centers. Contact Lisa McCoy at 240-313-3304.

• **Breast, Cervical, and Colon Cancer Screenings.** Offered free by Washington County Health Department to adults who qualify. For more information on eligibility or appointments call 240-313-3235 or visit www.washhealth.org/html/adult.htm.

• **AARP Driver's Safety Program**—A four-hour class to refine and develop safe defensive driving skills. Offered throughout the year at various locations. Contact Judy Brewer at 301-790-0275 ext. 220, for more information.

ONLINE RESOURCES

• **American Diabetes Association Website** A database of 5,000 healthy recipes categorized by nutrient and carbohydrate content. Visit <http://www.diabetes.org/my-food-advisor.jsp> online.

The Web site for the ARIC Participants

The website for the ARIC study participants can be accessed at www.aricnews.net. It has been set up to keep you updated on news about our study and to make it easy for you to contact us. For this you can use the **Contact ARIC** feature on the website's main page. Feel free to send us your comments and suggestions on what you would like to see on this website.

ARIC SCIENCE UPDATE

What Has ARIC Taught Us Recently?

Currently close to **700 publications** that reference the ARIC study are publicly available in a variety of scientific journals. Many additional technical reports have been distributed by ARIC to government and public health agencies. This means that the information you have given us over the years keeps helping the scientific community to work on important health issues.

Most of the scientists working on ARIC study data are in the

United States, at the universities that run the ARIC study. Once all information that can identify an individual participant in the ARIC study has been removed, ARIC data are also available to qualified expert scientists at other institutions, which span from many sites in the U.S. to Canada, Brazil, Australia, Singapore, and the United Kingdom among others. The value of the information you provided as a member of the ARIC study is so great that scientists all

over the world are now working with us to learn how to prevent chronic disease.

You can find a list of the ARIC publications at various places on the Internet. One is the website ARIC maintains for its study participants and the public (www.aricnews.net), under the Contributions section. Here we would like to highlight a few studies in the last few months which shed light on stroke, hypertension, and atherosclerosis.

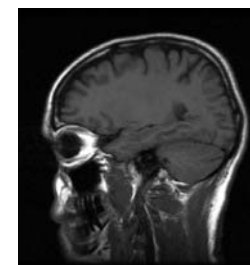
The Rewards of Physical Activity

Previous studies have shown that physical inactivity is one of the risk factors for ischemic stroke—in other words the type of stroke that results from restriction of blood supply to the brain and then may lead to brain function damage (American Heart Association; <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4716>). Among the African-American members in ARIC, physical activity related to mild sports was found to lower the odds of having an area in the brain blocked from its blood supply. This was studied using



magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain to scan for

small lesions that had not been previously detected (full details in Dubbert PM and collaborators, *Journal of Neurological Science* 2009;284:135-9).



MRI scan

Another group of ARIC scientists observed that increases in physical activity significantly increased a person's blood level of "good cholesterol" (HDL-cholesterol) regardless of their gender or race (full details in Monda KL and collaborators, *Journal of Lipid Research* 2009;50:1685-91). Having a lower odds of stroke and increased levels of "good cholesterol" from an active life style will surely please your loved ones and doctor.

The Benefits of Healthy Choices

A correlation was recently found between the amount of low-fat dairy servings that ARIC participants consumed and their risk of developing hypertension. The more low-fat dairy servings consumed



instead of high-fat dairy options, the lower their blood pressures measured every 3 years

from 1987-1999 (full details in Alonso A and collaborators, *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 2009; E-publication ahead of print).

Previous studies have found that people with a certain genetic variant have lower triglyceride and higher HDL-cholesterol levels in their blood than those

individuals without this variant. More recently this rare genetic variant was found in 2% of ~8,500 Caucasian ARIC study participants. Researchers did find that if an individual's caloric intake was composed of large amounts of carbohydrates, the benefit of having this genetic variant was no longer visible (full details in Nettleton JA and collaborators, *Atherosclerosis* 2009;203:214-20). This study was unable to tell the difference



between different kinds of carbohydrates (which can range from complex carbohydrates such as fruits and whole grains to sources of simple sugars such as candy and carbonated drinks). However, this study does indicate that the best prevention for atherosclerosis may always be a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.



Did you know...

...that without your continued voluntary participation, the ARIC Study would not be possible. So thank you again and we look forward to seeing you at your next visit.

After 25 years YOU are still our cornerstone!

