

# Oldest case of clogged arteries in Egypt mummy: study

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A wooden coffin lays open showing a mummy at an excavation site south of Cairo in 2005.

(PhysOrg.com) -- The first known case of clogged arteries, or atherosclerosis, has been found in the mummy of an Egyptian princess, said a study presented Sunday at a major US cardiology conference.

Researchers have long known that ancient Egyptians suffered from plaque build-up in the arteries that supply the heart, but the latest finding suggests that the syndrome may be more prevalent, and mysterious, than previously thought.

"Commonly, we think of [coronary artery](#) or heart disease as a consequence of modern lifestyles, mainly because it has increased in developing countries as they become more westernized," said Gregory

Thomas of the University of California, Irvine.

"These data point to a missing link in our understanding of heart disease, and we may not be so different from our ancestors," he said.

Researchers performed computerized tomography (CT) scans on 52 Egyptian mummies to determine whether they had atherosclerosis.

Of the 44 that had detectable arteries or hearts, 45 percent of them had calcium buildups in their vessel walls.

The oldest among them was an Egyptian princess who likely lived between 1580 and 1550 BC, and probably died when she was in her early 40s, researchers believe.

Even though [ancient Egyptians](#) ate a leaner diet, including less meat, and did not smoke cigarettes, they ended up with the same disease as modern humans.

But that does not mean people should disregard modern research, said co-author of the study Adel Allam of Al-Azhar University in Cairo.

"Recent studies have shown that by not smoking, having a lower blood pressure and a lower cholesterol level, calcification of our arteries is delayed," said Allam.

"On the other hand, from what we can tell from this study, humans are predisposed to [atherosclerosis](#), so it behooves us to take the proper measures necessary to delay it as long as we can."

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