Claudication & Tobacco

In your column on intermittent claudication (Adventist Review, March 22, 2007), you didn’t emphasize the role of tobacco. Why not?

The question didn’t come quite like this; it came from a medical doctor who took us to task for not talking about the dangers of smoking in peripheral vascular disease.

First, we want to thank the doctor for pointing out our extremely biased “Adventist” outlook and answering as though every Adventist doesn’t have or hasn’t had a problem with tobacco. Second, he was right. Peripheral vascular disease is usually caused by atherosclerosis, but tobacco is a major, major cause of atherosclerosis and intimately related to other vascular problems, too. Of course, we don’t claim to be experts on everything, but we want to correct our omission.

Some people think smoking fewer cigarettes is safer than smoking more—but in the case of vascular disease, cutting down doesn’t help. A 20-year study of 51,000 smokers found those cutting down from 20 to 10 cigarettes per day had the same death rate from heart disease as those smoking 20 per day.

Tobacco is a major cause of coronary artery disease, sudden cardiac arrest, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease. Quitting completely reduces the risk. Thanks, Doc, for making this point!

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While this column is provided as a service to our readers, Drs. Landless and Handysides unfortunately cannot enter into personal and private communication with our readers. We recommend that you consult with your personal physician on all matters of your health.