

# Black Hairy Tongue Effect on Atherosclerosis

Katsuhito Mori, Atsushi Shioi\*, Shuichi Jono, Yoshiki Nishizawa and Hirotooshi Morii

## Abstract

characterized by a black/brownish pigmentation of the filiform papillae of the lingual dorsum, which are hypertrophied.

examination, the evident elongation of the filiform papillae of the posterior two thirds of the lingual dorsum, with black

multiple factors that predispose to its onset are known, the most frequent being smoking and alcohol, tea and coffee

In most cases, the avoidance of causative agents associated with an enhanced oral hygiene is sufficient to resolve this

**Keywords:** Black hairy tongue; Hairy tongue; Black tongue; Tongue diseases; Mouth diseases

## Introduction

Black hairy tongue is a benign clinical condition, usually in males. A black hairy tongue is characterized by a black/brownish pigmentation of the filiform papillae of the lingual dorsum, which are hypertrophied. The length of the filiform papillae reach between 12-18 mm in length and a width of about 2 mm. The diagnosis of hairy tongue is established with a papillary length > 3 mm [2]. Hypertrophy of the papillae creates an environment conducive to the growth of microorganisms (most often bacteria or fungi), by facilitating the retention of food debris and of bacteria and/or fungi in the interpapillary space. There are no bacteria or fungi specifically associated with this condition, but *Candida* spp. and *Aspergillus* spp. can exacerbate it.

elderly patients or in cases of dysphagia, can also be associated, since there is a lower rate of licking of the lingual dorsum in these patients due to the absence of roughly textured foods, with the accumulation of keratin on the lingual surface. Likewise, the association between trigeminal neuralgia and hairy tongue is also described in the literature, due to the chewing difficulty caused by the pain, thus reducing the mechanical stimulus for the normal peeling of the tongue's surface. Conditions that cause xerostomia, as post-radiotherapy states and certain autoimmune pathologies, such as Sjogren's syndrome, also predispose to the appearance of black hairy tongue. It is common in the literature the description of cases of black hairy tongue that appear after taking certain antibiotics and antipsychotics and that resolve after its suspension, but the pathophysiological mechanisms are not fully known.

## Case Report

The dark colour of the tongue, which is associated with the intrinsic oral environment, combined with an increase in the papillary size, gives the lingual dorsum a hairy appearance [3].

Usually, being mostly an asymptomatic condition, patients seek medical attention exclusively for aesthetic reasons. When symptomatic, the most frequently reported complaints are glossodynia, dysgeusia and halitosis.

The pathogenesis of black hairy tongue is not fully understood yet, but it is associated with some factors that interfere, in some way, with the environment of the oral cavity. The most frequently associated factors are smoking and alcohol, tea and coffee consumption. The use of oral mouthwashes with hydrogen peroxide has also been implicated, the abuse of intravenous drugs through a mechanism that has not yet been clarified, as well as immunosuppression states such as oncological pathologies and HIV infection. Pasty diets, especially in

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