

Care Gram

Peripheral Arterial Disease

Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) is a common, but serious disease that happens when your arteries become clogged with fatty deposits (plaque). The plaque build up causes arteries to narrow and harden, limiting the blood flow to your legs. Plaque build-up in the legs does not always cause symptoms, so you may have PAD and not know it.

What Are the Risk Factors?

- Over the age of 50
- Smoke or used to smoke
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Family history of heart attack
- Male gender
- Obesity
- African-American ethnicity
- History of heart disease
- History of heart attack
- History of a stroke
- Family history of PAD
- Family history of stroke
- Inactive lifestyle

What Are the Warning Signs or Symptoms of PAD?

- Fatigue, heaviness, tiredness and/or cramping in your leg muscles during activity such as walking or climbing stairs called claudication
 - The pain or discomfort goes away when the activity is stopped or you are at rest
 - Hanging your legs over the edge of your bed may temporarily relieve your pain
- Numbness of the legs or feet at rest
- Cold legs or feet
- Pain in the legs and/or feet that disturbs sleep
- Sores or wounds on toes, feet or legs that heal slowly, poorly or not at all
- Color changes in the skin of the feet that includes blueness or paleness
- Poor nail growth and decreased hair growth on toes and legs
- Pulse in legs and/or feet are weak or absent
- Shiny skin on your legs
- Erectile dysfunction in men

How Is PAD Diagnosed?

Medical and Family History

- Your medical history including the presence of diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and other important factors



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- Your status as a current or former smoker
- Your personal and family history of heart disease
- Any symptoms that you may have in your legs while sitting, standing, walking, climbing or participating in other physical activities
- Your current diet and medicine that you are taking

Physical Exam

- Pulses are checked in your legs and feet to determine if there is enough blood flowing to these areas
- The color, temperature and appearance of your legs and feet
- Any signs of poor wound healing on your legs and feet

Diagnostic Tests

- Ankle-brachial index (ABI) is a simple test that compares blood pressure readings in your ankles with the blood pressure readings in your arms
- PAD also can be measured by taking a blood pressure check of the entire leg (Arterial Survey with Segmental Pressures and Waveforms) and by listening to the sound of blood flow using a special device called a “doppler”
 - Both of these methods may be able to help tell where the arteries are blocked and how bad
- Additional diagnostic tests done in Radiology can pinpoint exactly where a blockage is and help you and your doctor decide what is the best treatment for you
- Blood tests to measure cholesterol and check the level of C-reactive protein, which is a marker for heart disease

What are my treatment options?

There are two major goals for treating PAD – manage the symptoms and to prevent the hardening and narrowing of the arteries further.