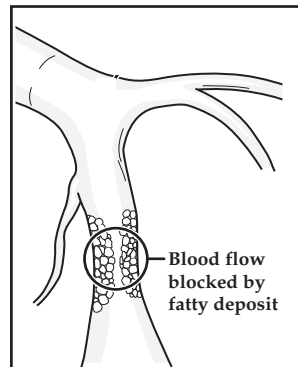


Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)

General Information

You may have circulation problems that have to do with your blood vessels. You may feel aches, pains, cramps, numbness or muscle fatigue when you exercise. These feelings may be caused by atherosclerosis, which interferes with blood flow to or from your blood vessels.

This is also known as peripheral artery disease (PAD).



© Allina Health System

In PAD, cholesterol and plaque (fatty deposits) collect on the insides of the walls your blood vessels. This most often occurs in your legs. If the fatty build-up keeps collecting, your blood flow will be reduced.

When you exercise, your blood flow may not meet your body's need for extra oxygen. Without a constant supply of oxygen, tissue below the blockage can be permanently damaged. You will need treatment to prevent the loss of your foot or part of your leg.

Symptoms of PAD

You may have leg cramps after walking a short distance. This is called intermittent claudication. When the plaque blockages are large enough that your blood flow is nearly or totally blocked, you may feel pain — even during rest.

There are many symptoms of PAD.

You may have:

- an aching, cramping, tired feeling or numbness, tingling or pain in your feet, toes, legs or buttocks after walking. (The pain goes away after a few minutes.)
- leg pain during the night or during rest that goes away if you hang your leg over the edge of your bed or put your leg up on a foot stool
- blue or red discoloration of your foot or leg when sitting or standing
- a wound or sore on your foot that does not heal
- cold feet and cold or numb calves
- dry and scaly feet and legs
- less hair growth on your legs
- no pulse in your foot
- impotence (in men).

How to Help Your PAD

- Don't smoke or use tobacco. This includes pipes, cigars, cigarettes and chewing tobacco. Smoking even as few as one or two cigarettes each day is harmful. Nicotine narrows blood vessels and makes it even harder for the blood to flow to your legs.
- Start a walking program. Ask your health care provider for advice.

(over)

- Keep your cholesterol level low.
By lowering cholesterol and saturated fats in your diet, you can reduce the risk of fatty buildup in your arteries. Check all food labels and buy foods that have polyunsaturated fats.
- Watch your blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, talk to your health care provider.
- Lose weight if you are overweight.
For every extra pound of fat, your heart needs to pump blood through an extra mile's worth of blood vessels.
- If you have diabetes, work to keep your blood glucose in good control. People with diabetes are at a greater risk for PAD because of the damage the disease can do to blood vessels. Check with your health care provider if you are having problems with your diabetes.
- Practice good foot care.
 - Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, sores, cracks and swelling.
 - Wash your feet with slightly warm water every day. Do not soak them because this will dry them out.
 - Always check inside your shoes for worn areas or things that might cause sores on your feet. Ask your health care provider about special shoes.
 - Use lotion and cream for dry skin, but not between your toes.
 - Cut your toenails straight across and smooth out sharp edges.
 - Wear shoes and socks even when inside to protect your feet.
 - **Call your health care provider right away if a cut, sore, blister or bruise does not heal after several days.**