

PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Eat for Health
- Move More
- Make Prevention a Priority



QUICK BITES

1. TOTAL LIPID PROFILE DONE TWICE YEARLY
2. AIM FOR LESS THAN 2400MG OF SODIUM A DAY
3. BP CHECK AT EVERY DOCTOR VISIT
4. GET MOVING EVERY DAY
5. CHOOSE FOODS THAT ARE LOW IN SODIUM
6. STOP SMOKING!

In peripheral artery disease, not enough blood can flow to the legs. This is usually due to fatty deposits called plaque that builds up along the walls of blood vessels. Over time, the build up reduces the amount of room blood has to flow through the vessels. This condition is known as atherosclerosis.

Risk Factors:

- Smoking cigarettes or other tobacco products
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Family history of heart disease
- Obesity
- Lack of regular exercise
- Kidney disease
- Race (blacks are at higher risk)

Symptoms:

The most common symptom is pain, also called claudication (pain or intermittent cramping in the legs or buttocks that starts with activity and eases with rest). Pain is often described as a deep ache, often in the calf muscle and may extend up the thigh. It may also be a coldness or numbness. If arteries are severely narrowed, there may even be pain at rest. When blood flow is completely stopped, such as with a blood clot, the leg becomes pale or turns blue and is cold to the touch.

Questions? Please call us at 1-877-503-0388 opt 1, ask for Debbie, Kim, Carol or Stacie.

Diagnosis:

Your doctor will look over your medical history, your family medical history and any personal risk factors you may have for atherosclerosis. During a physical exam your doctor will feel the pulse in your upper leg, on the inside of your ankle, the top of your foot and the back of your knee. If there is a weakness in any of these locations, it can be an indication of narrowed arteries. Your doctor may order an ultrasound of your legs to measure blood flow. This is a non-invasive painless procedure using sound waves to create a picture of your blood vessels.

Once you have peripheral arterial disease, your arteries will remain narrow, however with treatment the symptoms can decrease and even go away.

Prevention:

You can reduce your chances of developing PAD by doing a few simple things:

1. Don't smoke.
2. Maintain a healthy weight
3. Eat a healthy diet: one that is loaded with fruits and vegetables and low in saturated fats
4. Exercise regularly: ideally 45 minutes every day or most days
5. Lower your blood pressure: with medication if necessary



Treatment:

Treatment for PAD focuses on modifying risk factors. Quitting smoking reduces the symptoms of intermittent claudication and also decreases the likelihood the disease will get worse. This is the first most important step in controlling the disease. Lowering cholesterol levels are next, if they are high, and then keeping blood pressure in normal range.

Studies have shown that people who exercise regularly can nearly double the distance they can walk before experiencing leg pain. Try to exercise at least 30 minutes most days. You may need frequent breaks at first. Even if you have to stop every few minutes, don't give up. Any activity is beneficial. Most people choose walking and find a track or treadmill easier than pavement. You can also try bike riding or swimming.

Even if you exercise and lower your blood pressure or cholesterol, you may need medications. Your doctor may recommend blood thinners. If this is the case, it is very important that you discuss all the details of the medication. Are there any dietary restrictions? What are the precautions with the medication? What happens if I miss a dose? Does this medicine interact with any of my other medications, including over the counter?

Finally, if none of these help, you may need a revascularization procedure: either opening the vessel itself or bypassing it altogether. Either way, good communication with your doctor is imperative.

For persons with PAD, there is treatment and control. Pain relief is possible. If you have persistent leg pain with activity, talk to your doctor!

Keeping Your Heart Healthy is our Number One Priority!