



## WHAT IS PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE?

Peripheral artery disease (PAD) is a serious circulation problem that affects the arteries that carry blood to your arms and legs. PAD occurs when the arteries become narrowed by a buildup of plaque — including cholesterol, fatty deposits, calcium, and other substances in the blood. Blocked arteries prevent oxygen-rich blood from reaching the muscles when the muscles need it most. PAD can also lead to a more serious condition called critical limb ischemia, or CLI. This happens when all blood flow is cut off from the lower limb and without proper care, can lead to amputations.

## WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF PAD?

More than 4 million Americans suffer leg pain symptoms. Those at the highest risk of PAD are over the age of 50, with high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes and stroke. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of developing an artery blockage.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

One of the classic symptoms of PAD is dull, cramping pain in the legs, hips, or buttocks that happens when you exercise. This pain stops when you rest — a symptom called intermittent claudication. Some people with PAD have pain even when they are not exercising.

Other symptoms of PAD include:



**NUMBNESS OR TINGLING IN THE LEGS, FEET, OR TOES**



**CHANGES IN SKIN COLOR (PALE, BLUISH, OR REDDISH COLORATION)**



**COOL SKIN (FOR EXAMPLE, IN THE LEGS, FEET, ARMS, OR HANDS)**



**INFECTIONS/SORES ON LEGS AND FEET THAT DO NOT HEAL**

## RISK FACTORS



**PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES HAVE PAD<sup>1</sup>**



**PEOPLE WITH DIABETES ARE 4x MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP PAD<sup>2,3</sup>**



**IN THE U.S., BLACKS HAVE 2x THE RATE OF PAD COMPARED TO WHITES<sup>4</sup>**



**WOMEN WITH CLI ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE WORSE OUTCOMES UPON DIAGNOSIS WHICH LEADS TO DECREASED MOBILITY, POORER FUNCTIONAL STATUS AND HIGHER RATES OF DEATH**



## REDUCING YOUR RISKS

There are things you can do to reduce your risk of peripheral artery disease like quitting smoking, taking steps to lower cholesterol, exercising regularly, keeping diabetes and high blood pressure under control. There are also some risk factors that cannot be avoided, such as menopause, aging, or having a family history of heart disease. Additionally, men are also at higher risk of PAD than women. It is important to bring up any concerns you may have with a physician.

If you have symptoms or think you may be at risk, get screened for PAD. You can get screened at your doctor's office. The tests for PAD can be quick and painless — as simple as a blood pressure measurement.



**QUIT  
SMOKING**



**LOWER BLOOD  
PRESSURE/CHOLESTEROL**



**EXERCISE REGULARLY /  
INCREASE PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY**



**MAINTAIN HEALTHY  
WEIGHT / DIET**



**VISIT DOCTOR  
REGULARLY**

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

If you are experiencing any of the symptoms listed or know that you have certain risk factors, here are some questions that you can ask your doctor in order to help you get access to the care you may need:

- Does my medical history raise my risk for PAD?
- Which screening tests or exams are right for me?
- If I have PAD, what steps should I take to treat it?
- What treatment options do you think are best for me? Medication or a procedure that opens my blood vessels?
- Will PAD increase my risk for other conditions?
- What is my blood sugar level? If it's too high or if I have diabetes, what should I do about it?
- What is my blood pressure? Do I need to do anything to manage these numbers?
- What are my cholesterol numbers? (These include total cholesterol, LDL, HDL, and triglycerides, a type of fat found in the blood and food.) Do I need to do anything about them?
- What can I do to quit smoking?

### SOURCES:

1. National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. About PAD. <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/pad/> Accessed October 2019.
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5. Long, C. Jones, WS. (2017). Disparities in the Care of Patients with Peripheral Artery Disease and Critical Limb Ischemia. *American College of Cardiology*.

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