



# Women Living with Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)



## Get the Care You Need

If you've been living with peripheral artery disease (PAD) for a while, you probably know that it can cause serious damage to parts of your body, usually the legs and feet. In some cases, it can even lead to the loss (amputation) of the leg or foot — especially when people don't get medical care early enough.

**The good news is that you can take steps to advocate for yourself and make sure you're getting the treatment you need to be as healthy as possible.**

## Advocate for Yourself

**Ask your doctor if you need an angiogram.** An angiogram is a test your doctor can use to see what arteries are blocked and what kind of treatment might be most helpful for you.

**Learn about your treatment options.** Treatment for PAD often includes walking programs and medicines, like blood thinners. Treatment can also include procedures like:

- **Angioplasty** — which uses a balloon to widen blocked arteries and sometimes uses a stent (a small tube) to help keep an artery open
- **Bypass surgery** — which uses a piece of another blood vessel from your body (or an artificial blood vessel created in a lab) to make a new path around a blocked artery



### Women and PAD

Women are more likely to develop PAD than men<sup>1</sup> — but may be less likely to get appropriate care and treatment.<sup>2</sup> One reason this may happen is because women often don't experience typical PAD leg pain or report leg pain as often as men.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.12.010](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2006.12.010) <sup>2</sup> [ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5984648/](https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5984648/)

<sup>3</sup> [doi.org/10.1055%2Fs-0038-1636515](https://doi.org/10.1055%2Fs-0038-1636515)

## Ask your doctor questions to help make sure you're getting the care you need.

For example:

- Why do you recommend my current treatment plan?
- Is a balloon or stent a treatment option for me?
- What can I do to lower my risk for amputation?
- Am I eligible for a clinical trial?

**Keep up with your medical appointments.** But keep in mind that you have the right to get care from a doctor you trust — someone who takes your symptoms seriously, listens to your opinions, and answers all of your questions.

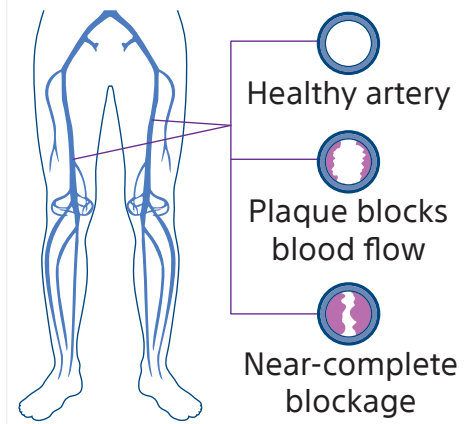
If you're feeling unsure about your care, ask for a second opinion from another doctor.

**Make your own health a priority.** Women often serve in a caregiving role. But it's important to take care of yourself, too — for example, by calling your doctor if you have a new symptom or something doesn't feel right.

**Bring a family member or friend with you to your medical appointments.** They can offer emotional support, help you ask questions, and take notes.



If you have sores on your legs or feet that won't heal, be sure to show them to your doctor. This could be a sign of a serious problem, so it's important to get treatment as soon as possible.



PAD is when plaque (made up of cholesterol and fat) builds up in the arteries that carry blood from your heart to your legs. This hardens and narrows the arteries, which means the legs don't get enough blood. If blood flow is completely blocked, the tissue in your legs can die — sometimes leading to amputation.

