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## **Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD)**

### **What is PAD?**

It is known by many names – peripheral arterial disease, peripheral vascular disease, leg atherosclerosis, claudication, or just poor circulation. PAD affects nearly 8 million Americans and up to 30% of them will die within 5 years – about 75% of these deaths will be caused by heart disease. Thus, PAD is SERIOUS.

### **What are its risk factors and symptoms?**

Arteries can slowly become narrowed and blocked as a consequence of AGE, SMOKING, HIGH CHOLESTEROL, OR DIABETES. Less blood reaching the muscle in our legs makes them hurt (claudication) like angina makes our heart muscle hurt. Often you will feel cramping, numbness, or pain in your leg muscles on walking that goes away when you stop and rest and that recurs when you begin to walk again. MANY PEOPLE DON'T EVEN HAVE THESE OBVIOUS LEG SYMPTOMS. For individuals with the most severe blockages, skin ulcers, non healing wounds, or even gangrene can occur. With prompt treatment, pain can be lessened and amputation can be avoided.

### **How do you detect it?**

You can be tested for PAD with a common test called "ABI" or ankle-brachial index. It compares the blood pressure at your ankle to an arm blood pressure to determine the severity of PAD. Most patient also benefit from a Doppler duplex ultrasound test. It is a risk free way to indentify the site of a blockage and to determine how much it narrows the artery. If there are serious blockages detected, then you may need further testing including magnetic resonance angiography (MRA) or CTA without puncturing your artery. In some cases, it may be important to do an invasive testing called peripheral angiography which will require most of the time same day hospital admission and some mild anesthesia.

### **What is the treatment?**

There is no "cure" for PAD, but there are many ways that you can prevent the progression of the disease. A Good health practice, a healthy diet, an exercise and not smoking will slow the progression of PAD AS WELL AS REDUCE THE CHANCE OF HEART ATTACK AND STROKE. Controlling risk factors and use of medications can lessen the effect of the most severe consequences of PAD. In severe cases, you may need to have angioplasty - in which small tubes and wires are placed in your legs to open the blockage with tiny balloon and sometimes placing a metal scaffolding called stent to keep artery open, thus, restoring blood flow to the leg muscles. Sometimes, if blockages are long, a bypass surgery may be needed in which a surgeon physically bypass the long blockage by using a synthetic tube or person's own vein.

You can go to following websites for more information on Peripheral arterial disease:

[www.padcoalition.org](http://www.padcoalition.org) ; [www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov) ; [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) ; [www.vdf.org](http://www.vdf.org)