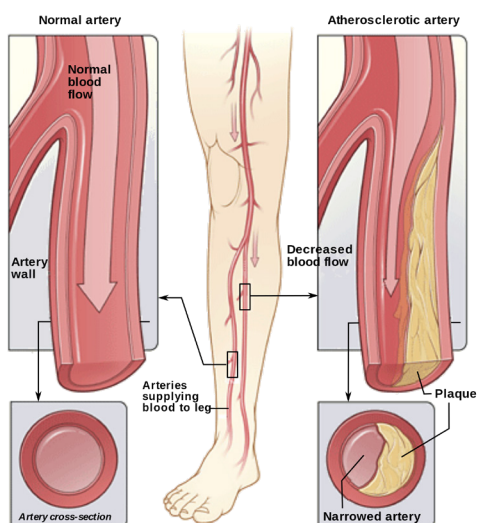




# Peripheral Arterial Disease

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is the narrowing or blockage of the arteries that carry blood from your heart to your limbs, causing poor circulation. It is a common yet serious disease primarily caused by the buildup of fatty plaque in the arteries, which is called atherosclerosis. PAD can occur in any artery, but it most commonly affects the blood flow in your legs.



A normal artery is shown on the left. The right shows an artery narrowed by atherosclerosis, causing PAD.

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PAD in its most advanced stage is known as critical limb ischemia (CLI). CLI can cause severe pain in the feet or toes, even while resting. Complications from this type of severe artery blockage may include non-healing sores and wounds on the legs and feet. Left untreated, the complications of CLI could result in amputation of the affected limb.

About 1 in 4 people with PAD experience common symptoms, which may include some or all of the following:<sup>1</sup>

- Pain, fatigue, heaviness, tiredness or cramping in the leg muscles (claudication) that occurs during activity, such as walking, and is relieved by resting. Pain may also be felt in buttocks, thigh or calf<sup>1</sup>
- Leg numbness or weakness
- Color changes in the skin of the feet, including paleness or blueness
- Coldness in one leg compared to the other leg (skin cool to the touch)
- Poor nail growth and decreased hair growth on toes and legs
- Shiny skin on your legs
- No pulse or a weak pulse in your legs or feet

**Timely detection and treatment of PAD can improve your quality of life, help you keep your independence and mobility and reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke, leg amputation and even death.**

## Treatment Options

The overall goals for treating PAD are to reduce symptoms, improve quality of life and mobility and prevent heart attack, stroke and amputation.

### When caught early, treatment may include:

1. Making lifestyle changes
2. Taking medication
3. Walking and exercise

Critical limb ischemia (CLI) however, may require comprehensive treatment by a vascular surgeon or vascular specialist. If the blood flow in one of your limbs is partially or completely blocked, it may be necessary to have a procedure or surgery in addition to medications and lifestyle changes. Procedures like angioplasty and bypass graft surgery are not a cure, but they can improve the blood circulation to your legs.

**Because many individuals with PAD have no symptoms, it often goes undiagnosed, so it is important to ask your healthcare provider about your risks.**

## Risk Factors<sup>2</sup>

More than 8 million Americans ages 40 and older have PAD, and the risk of PAD increases with age.<sup>1</sup> Other factors that increase your chances of developing the disease include:

- **Diabetes** - People who have diabetes are four times more likely to get PAD.
- **Smoking** - People who smoke now or have smoked in the past have a much higher risk of PAD.
- **High blood pressure** - High blood pressure, also called hypertension, raises the risk of developing plaque in the arteries.
- **High cholesterol** - Excess cholesterol and fat in your blood contribute to the formation of plaque in the arteries.
- **Heart disease** - Those with heart disease have a higher risk of getting PAD.
- **Ethnicity** - PAD is most common in African Americans, affecting nearly 1 in 10 over age 40.

1. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. (2022). Peripheral Artery Disease.
2. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. (2021). Facts About Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD).

**Wound care is essential:** Taking care of your wound is taking care of your health. To refer a patient or schedule an appointment, call: