



PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE: CONTROL YOUR RISK



As many as 8 million Americans have peripheral artery disease (PAD), a common type of peripheral vascular disease. The American Heart Association uses the term peripheral vascular disease (PVD) to refer to diseases of blood vessels outside the heart and brain, often a narrowing of vessels that carry blood to the legs, arms, stomach, or kidneys. Individuals with PAD generally have an increased risk for heart attack and stroke. Fortunately, once detected most cases of PAD can be managed successfully with medication and lifestyle changes.

RISK FACTORS

While some risk factors for PAD—such as aging and personal or family history of heart disease—cannot be changed, others can be modified. The following are controllable risk factors for PAD.

- Cigarette smoking
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Physical inactivity
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure

SYMPTOMS

Frequently, people do not experience symptoms of PAD or mistake symptoms for something else. The American Heart Association reports that the most common symptoms of PAD are cramping, pain or tiredness in the leg or hip muscles while walking or climbing stairs. Generally, the pain subsides with rest and returns with activity. Additional symptoms include:

- Leg pain that does not go away when one stops exercising
- Foot or toe wounds that will not heal or heal very slowly
- A marked decrease in temperature of lower leg or foot particularly compared to the other leg or the rest of the body
- Gangrene

DETECTION AND DIAGNOSIS

PAD is diagnosed with a physical examination and a simple and painless ankle-brachial index (ABI) test. The ABI test compares blood pressure in the feet to blood pressure in the arms to determine blood flow. If an abnormal ratio between the blood pressure in the feet and the blood pressure in the arms is detected, additional testing will likely be recommended. In most cases, PAD can be effectively managed with medication and lifestyle changes. Sometimes, lifestyle changes and medications will not be effective, and angioplasty, a non-surgical procedure that widens narrowed or blocked arteries, may be necessary. In some cases, people who have PAD may require surgery.



If you have risk factors for or experience any symptoms of peripheral artery disease, contact your physician to schedule a screening.

WHAT IS PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE?

Peripheral artery disease is the most common type of peripheral vascular disease. According to the American Heart Association, many people never experience symptoms of peripheral artery disease or mistake them for a back or muscle problem.

For more information about the Heart & Vascular Program, call 214-345-2680. For a physician referral, call 1-877-THR-WELL (1-877-847-9355).

