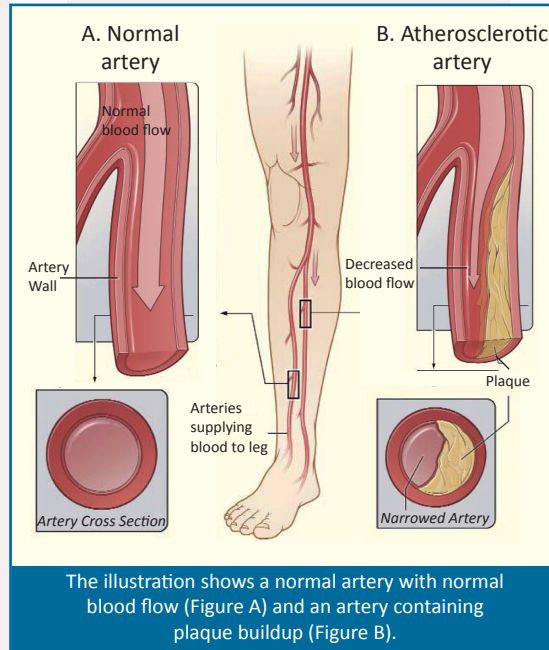


What is PAD?

Peripheral arterial disease, or P.A.D., develops when your arteries become clogged with plaque—fatty deposits that limit blood flow to your legs. Just like clogged arteries in the heart, clogged arteries in the legs mean you are at risk for having a heart attack or stroke.

Plaque buildup in the legs does not always cause symptoms, so many people can have P.A.D. and not know it. People who do experience symptoms, such as pain or cramping in the legs, often do not report them, believing they are a natural part of aging or due to another cause. In all, P.A.D. affects 8 to 12 million people in the United States, especially those over 50.

You can lower your risk for P.A.D. Timely detection and treatment of P.A.D. can improve the quality of your life; help you keep your independence and mobility; and reduce your risk of heart attack, stroke, leg amputation, and even death. Taking steps to learn about P.A.D., including asking your health care provider to check your



risk, can help you stay in circulation longer to enjoy your life.

What causes P.A.D.?

The cause of plaque buildup in the limbs is unknown in most cases. However, there are some conditions and habits that raise your chance of developing P.A.D.

Your risk increases if you:

- Are over the age of 50.
- Smoke or used to smoke. Those who smoke or have a history of smoking have up to four times greater risk of P.A.D.
- Have diabetes. One in every three people over

the age of 50 with diabetes is likely to have P.A.D.

- Have high blood pressure. Also called hypertension, high blood pressure raises the risk of developing plaque in the arteries.
- Have high blood cholesterol. Excess cholesterol and fat in your blood contribute to the formation of plaque in the arteries, reducing or blocking blood flow to your heart, brain, or limbs.
- Have a personal history of vascular disease, heart attack, or stroke. If you have heart disease, you have a one in three chance of also having P.A.D.
- Are African American. African Americans are more than twice as likely to have P.A.D. as their white counterparts.

Most people with P.A.D. have one or more conditions or habits that raise the risk for heart disease: smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure, and/or high blood cholesterol.

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P.A.D.–Peripheral Artery Disease

www.BethanyHealthcare.com

What are the Signs & Symptoms of P.A.D.?

If they are present, the typical signs and symptoms of the disease include:

- Claudication—fatigue, heaviness, tiredness, cramping in the leg muscles (buttocks, thigh, or calf) that occurs during activity such as walking or climbing stairs. This pain or discomfort goes away once the activity is stopped and during rest. Many people do not report this problem to their health care providers because they think it is a natural part of aging or due to some other cause.
- Pain in the legs and/or feet that disturbs sleep.
- Sores or wounds on toes, feet, or legs that heal slowly, poorly, or not at all.
- Color changes in the skin of the feet, including paleness or blueness.
- A lower temperature in one leg compared to the other leg.
- Poor nail growth and decreased hair growth on toes and legs.

Diagnosis of P.A.D.—Exam

During the physical exam, your health care provider may check:

- Pulses in your legs and feet to determine if there is enough blood flowing to these areas;
- Many of those with P.A.D. experience no symptoms.
- The color, temperature, and appearance of your legs and feet; and For signs of poor wound healing on the legs and feet.

Diagnostic Tests

When checking you for P.A.D., your health care provider may perform a simple noninvasive test called an ankle-brachial index (ABI). Painless and easy, the ABI compares the blood pressure readings in your ankles with the blood pressure readings in your arms. An ABI can help determine whether you have P.A.D., but it cannot identify which arteries are narrowed or blocked.

- Your health care provider may decide to do a Doppler ultrasound test to see whether a specific artery is open or blocked. This test uses sound waves to measure the blood flow in the veins and arteries in your arms and legs.

Treatment for P.A.D.

The overall goals for treating P.A.D. are to reduce any symptoms, improve quality of life and mobility, and prevent heart attack, stroke, and amputation. There are three main approaches to treating P.A.D.: making lifestyle changes; taking medication; and in some cases, having a special procedure or surgery.

Your health care provider will determine the best treatment options for you, based on your medical history and the severity of your condition. Early treatment of P.A.D. can restore your mobility, decrease your risk of heart attack and stroke, and possibly save your life.

Bethany HomeHealth Can Help

The nurses and therapists of Bethany HomeHealth care for patients with conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and hypertension, all of which are known to also be associated with P.A.D.

As part of a coordinated care program with your physician, your skilled nurse at Bethany can monitor your condition to look for signs and symptoms of P.A.D.

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