



QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

Peripheral Vascular Disease

Peripheral Vascular Disease is called PVD for short. With PVD the blood vessels become narrow or blocked. There is a slow down of blood flow to the:

- Arms and legs
- Neck
- Stomach
- Hips

The most common cause of blocked blood vessels is a buildup of a fatty substance. This fatty substance is called plaque (say: plak).

In rare cases the arteries are inflamed and swell or are damaged by an injury.

Signs

- When walking, you feel a squeezing pain in the
 - calf
 - thigh
 - buttocks
- The pain stops when you rest
- Weakness in the legs
- Poor balance
- Cold and numb feet or toes
- Sores that are slow to heal
- Unable to have an erection

- Pain in the foot and toe while resting (This happens when the condition gets worse.)
- Feet and toes are pale even during exercise or when propped up
- Loss of hair on feet and toes
- Blue or purple marks on the legs, feet or toes

Some people do not have any signs until other problems develop. Your doctor can decide if you have PVD. Your doctor may order tests to check you for PVD.

Who is Most at Risk for the Disease?

The people most at risk for the disease are those who:

- Smoke
- Have high blood fat (cholesterol)
- Have high blood pressure
- Have diabetes
- Have a family history of the disease
- Had a stroke

Tests

- **Ankle/Brachial Index.** (ABI) The doctor checks the blood pressure in your arms and ankles.
- **Treadmill.** The doctor takes your blood pressure before and after you walk on an exercise machine. This machine is called a treadmill.
- **Angiography.** Dye is put in your veins through an IV. Then you have an X-ray. The dye shows the places that are blocked in your arms or legs.
- **Ultrasound.** This test uses sound waves to take pictures of your arteries. The doctor can watch your blood flow and find blockages.
- **MRI.** This test is like an X-ray. It gives the doctor a detailed map of blood vessels.

Treatment

- If you smoke, **quit!** This is the most important step you can take.
- Eat a low-fat diet. You may need medicine to lower your blood fat (cholesterol) levels.
- Exercise. Talk to your doctor about how much and what kind of exercise is best for you.

- Strict control of your blood sugar is important if you have diabetes.
- Follow your doctor's orders on how to control your blood pressure.
- Check for foot or leg sores. Get treatment right away if you see any.
- Do not wear tight shoes or stockings.
- Keep your feet clean.
- Use lotions to keep the skin on your feet from getting dry.
- Put cotton or lambs wool between your toes. This will keep them from rubbing.
- Do not soak your feet.
- Your doctor may have you take aspirin or other medicine to help your blood flow.

If the above treatments do not work, other steps may be needed. The most common are:

1. **Angioplasty:** A thin plastic tube is put into the artery through a tiny cut. The tube has a tiny balloon on the end of it. The doctor finds the spot where the artery is blocked. Then the balloon is blown up. The balloon pushes aside the fatty substance (plaque). The blood can flow normally again. The tube is taken out.

2. **Bypass Surgery:** A new piece of vein is attached to the artery above and below the blockage. This piece of vein may come from another part of your body. Or, it can be of man-made material. This new piece of vein lets the blood flow around the blocked area. It is the same idea as a car taking a detour around a problem in the road.

3. **Amputation:** If disease gets very bad, the affected body part may have to be cut off (amputated). People with diabetes are most at risk for this surgery.

If you have PVD you need to be tested for heart disease and stroke.

Call your doctor right away if you have

- Leg pain
- Numbness
- Pale or blue-black skin

Where to Go for More Help
St. Vincent Charity Hospital
Wound Center
216-363-2646

Healthy Artery Program
216-363-3301

Cardiac Rehab Department
216-363-2693

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
PO Box 30105
Bethesda, MD 20824-0105
www.nhlbi.nih.gov

American Heart Association (AHA)
216-791-7500 in Cleveland
1-800-242-8721

How can I find a Doctor?

St. Vincent Charity Hospital has doctors who have special training in vascular disease. To contact one of our doctors call the:

Physician Referral Line at 1-800-223-8662
Visit our Web site at www.stvincentcharity.com

Our doctors serve with a deep respect for all. Their goal is to give the best care and education whether or not a person can pay.

St. Vincent Charity Hospital
2351 E. 22nd Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44115
216-861-6200
TTY: Ohio Relay 1-800-750-075

St. Luke's Health Care Center
11201 Shaker Boulevard
Cleveland, Ohio 44104
216-721-6900

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**ST. VINCENT CHARITY
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