



Peripheral Arterial Disease

Exercise is Key

What is peripheral arterial disease?

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is a build-up of plaque (like cholesterol, white blood cells, calcium) that can lower or block blood flow to your legs. This can cause problems in your legs and/or feet, like pain/cramping/tightness, sores, skin colour changes, and poor growth of nails and hair.



How can exercise help?

Regular exercise can:

- Lessen leg pain/cramping/tightness (called claudication).
- Reduce the chance that you'll need surgery.
- Improve the health of your heart and arteries.
- Boost your mood.
- Improve your sleep.

What kind of exercise is best?



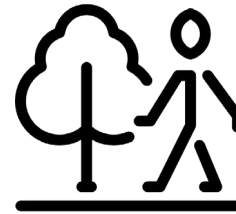
Supervised exercise programs (like those with a physiotherapist) are most helpful but exercises (like walking) done from home can be good too.

What should my walking program look like?

- Start with as little as 10 minutes of walking.
- Walk fast enough to bring on pain/cramping/tightness that you can handle, then rest until it eases enough to start walking again. This is called the walk-rest-walk pattern.
- Continue this pattern, increasing your walk time by about 5 minutes per week until you're doing 40 to 60 minutes of walking each time.
- Aim to walk 3 to 5 days every week.

What about other types of exercise?

Do activities that can strengthen your body (like carrying heavy bags) and improve your balance (like yoga). Aim for at least 2 days per week.



IMPORTANT TIPS

1. Write down your exercise goals and record your activity each week.
2. Activity trackers (like a pedometer or smart watch) can help to keep track of how you're doing.
3. Wear comfortable shoes and clothing.
4. Stay hydrated.
5. Choose walking routes that have resting places.
6. Have fun—try different routes and consider walking with others.



7. Get medical attention if you have chest pain, dizziness, or nausea.

KEEP IN MIND...

- Don't be afraid of walking with leg pain/cramping/tightness. It will not damage your muscles.
- It usually takes several weeks of walking until your symptoms start to improve.

