



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.

