

## PAD: Are You at Risk?

There's no question that Coronary Artery Disease, or heart disease, is a serious condition, and most people are familiar with it. Heart disease causes a buildup of fatty deposits in the coronary arteries, leading to a narrowing of the arteries, reduced blood flow to the heart and eventually, very possibly a heart attack. If you knew your heart wasn't getting enough blood, and a heart attack was likely, you would do something about it, right?

So, what about Peripheral Artery Disease? Much less known than heart disease, it is actually quite similar—it causes a narrowing of arteries leading to a reduced blood flow to your limbs. If left untreated, it can lead to limb damage or even loss, stroke, and often heart disease and subsequent heart attack. Yet while 8 million Americans are living with Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD), many of us know very little about this common, and dangerous, disease.

Many people with PAD may have very mild symptoms, and not even be aware they have a problem. But according to the Mayo Clinic, some common signs and symptoms include:

- Painful cramping in your hip, thigh or calf muscles after walking or climbing stairs
- Leg numbness or weakness
- Coldness in your lower leg or foot, especially when compared with the other leg
- Sores on your toes, feet or legs that won't heal
- A change in the color of your legs
- Hair loss on your feet and legs
- Changes in your toenails

If you have any of these symptoms, don't assume they are a natural part of aging. Call your doctor to make an appointment.

Most PAD is treatable with lifestyle changes (quitting smoking is the single most important thing you can do!), diet, and exercise. Sometimes medications or surgery are required, but they can often be avoided if PAD is caught early.

Find out more about this condition before it becomes a serious threat to your health. Talk to your primary care doctor today, as he or she is the best person to assess whether you are at risk for PAD. There are simple, painless exams and tests he or she can do to evaluate you for this condition, and many ways you can improve the health of your veins and arteries—starting right now!

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