

PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE (PAD) INFORMATION SHEET

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is a common condition, in which a build-up of fatty deposits (atherosclerosis) in the arteries restricts blood supply to leg muscles. It is also known as peripheral vascular disease (PVD). Many people with PAD have no symptoms. However, some develop a painful ache in their legs when they walk, which usually disappears after a few minutes' rest. The medical term for this is "intermittent claudication".

Why should I attend my annual peripheral artery disease review?

While PAD is not immediately life threatening, the process of atherosclerosis that causes it can lead to serious and potentially fatal problems. Having PAD means you have a much higher risk of developing other serious forms of cardiovascular disease such as heart attack and stroke, because it is likely that blood vessels elsewhere in your body are also affected by atherosclerosis. If the symptoms of PAD get worse, there is a risk that leg tissue will begin to die (known as gangrene). In severe cases, the lower leg may have to be amputated. Peripheral artery disease can be managed effectively with a combination of lifestyle changes, medicines and in some cases surgery.

Your review appointment is a regular opportunity to discuss changes to your lifestyle and treatment, which will benefit you. You can also raise any questions or concerns you have about your health and medication. This can help to stop your symptoms of PAD deteriorating. The lifestyle changes and medications which will be discussed also help to reduce your risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, heart attack and stroke.

What will happen at my appointment?

The nurse will discuss your condition with you and ask specific questions to find out if you are having any problems. She will ask about your lifestyle and your medication and check your height and weight, along with your blood pressure. She will also perform some blood tests. She will then be able to advise you about any changes she would recommend. If needed, she will refer you to a doctor for further review.

What lifestyle changes will help me?

- Stopping smoking will reduce your risk of developing further cardiovascular disease as well as COPD and cancer. You can get help and support from 0800 052 5855 and www.smokefree.nhs.uk
- Increasing your regular exercise. Advice can be obtained from www.prescription4exercise.com
- Reducing your intake of foods high in saturated fat such as butter, cheese, cakes and biscuits. Small amounts of unsaturated fat has benefits e.g. oily fish, avocados, seeds.
- Weight loss if your BMI is greater than 25.
- Reducing your alcohol intake to less than 14 units a week for women and 21 units a week for men. For help and support contact 0300 555 5999 and www.bdaat.co.uk

What tests may help me?

- Diabetes screen – if you are diabetic this increases the likelihood of developing more symptoms of cardiovascular disease such as angina, heart attack and stroke.
- Cholesterol measurement – too much cholesterol increases the risk of atherosclerosis and cardiovascular disease.
- Blood pressure measurement – high blood pressure is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease.
- Kidney function testing

What medication may help me?

- Antiplatelet drugs such as aspirin and clopidogrel, which thin the blood and help to prevent clots forming if a fatty plaque breaks away from the blood vessel wall.
- Statins to lower cholesterol and therefore reduce plaque formation e.g. simvastatin, Atorvastatin.
- Medication to reduce blood pressure and the risk of cardiovascular disease