Clogged arteries are like clogged plumbing.
"Hardening of the arteries" is a common disease that causes arteries to become clogged with plaque, much like old water pipes can become clogged with debris or lime. The condition can cause heart attacks and strokes, but another effect of cardiovascular disease is peripheral arterial disease (PAD), which affects the extremities, usually the toes, feet and legs. If you have PAD, you most likely have artery disease throughout the body.

Patients with PAD may have no symptoms at all, but can have pain in the feet, numbness in the feet, or pain in the leg while walking, which goes away when walking stops. If the disease gets worse and is untreated, patients may face amputation. Below are some information resources for patients and families.

**You are at higher risk of PAD if you:**

- Smoke or have smoked cigarettes
- Have diabetes, high cholesterol or are obese
- Are over 65
- Don’t exercise much

Peripheral Artery Disease Patient Information Page  [printable version]

Find a Vascular Specialist Near You
Smoking increases risk of PAD more than coronary disease or stroke. Study found risk of PAD rose at least twice as sharply as the risk for either heart disease or stroke.
'Heart Disease' Can Also Affect your Feet, Kidneys and Brain. One in Five Americans Over Age 60 Have Peripheral Artery Disease.
Six Diabetes-Related Vascular Complications -- And How to Avoid them. People who live with diabetes know they have a lot of health management to do, but some may not understand that many complications stem from one primary issue.
A Walk With Fido Improves Vascular Leg Health. Research confirms it - dogs can improve your vascular health. Regular walks help dog owners avoid the ravages of PAD and owning a dog reduces the owner's blood pressure.
September is PAD Month - Know the Risks of Peripheral Arterial Disease. If you are healthy and 50 or younger, your PAD risk is low, but if you smoke or have diabetes your risk is much higher. And it goes up with every decade of life.
‘Can You Save My Leg?’ Researchers Have a Better Answer For Patients. Some patients who are in danger of losing an arm or leg due to hardening of the arteries have been getting more hopeful news from vascular surgeons.

Low Income PAD Patients Tend to Choose Surgery Over Exercise. Smokers and low income PAD patients are less willing to try exercise to avoid surgery.

Regular Walks Give People With Diabetes a Leg Up on Health. Diabetics are at higher risk of PAD, but one of the best things they can do for their legs is walk often.

Answers to Your FAQs about Diabetes and Leg Artery Disease. Published in EverydayHealth. Dr. George Andros, SVS Member

PRINTABLE PAD BROCHURE

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**Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD)**

**What is Peripheral Arterial Disease?**

You probably are familiar with the terms angina and heart attack, which are related to a blockage of blood flow to the heart. That same sort of blockage can occur elsewhere in the body, depriving the limbs (the peripheral parts of the body) of oxygen and nutrients. Left untreated, the disease can lead to amputation.

Healthy peripheral arteries are smooth and unobstructed, allowing blood to freely provide the legs with oxygen, glucose and other nutrients. As we age, peripheral arteries build up plaque, a sticky substance made up mostly of fat and cholesterol. Plaque narrows the passageway within the arteries and causes them to become stiff.

A moderate blockage in one of arteries in a major leg muscle, such as the calf or thigh, can cause pain when walking. This pain can be temporarily decreased with rest, but will act up again with more walking or activity.

Lower extremity pain, similar to angina, is called claudication by medical providers. The pain itself is not limb-threatening but it is a sign that the person should make lifestyle changes and see a doctor. Examples of possible treatments include: smoking cessation, daily exercise and medical management.

If the disease becomes more severe, the limb can be starved of basic nutrients and the patient begins to suffer pain at rest (especially at night). Sores that won’t heal may develop on the feet. This is a very concerning sign for losing toes or even amputation of the leg. An urgent referral to a vascular surgeon is necessary to prevent limb loss in this situation.
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