



Life Saving Tips About... Special Treatments for P.A.D.

P.A.D. is a common disease that occurs when the arteries in the legs become narrowed or clogged with fatty deposits, or *plaque*. When leg arteries are clogged, blood flow to the legs and feet is reduced which may cause pain when walking. P.A.D. may also lead to heart attack, stroke, amputation or death.

Like other diseases of the arteries, P.A.D. is treated by making lifestyle changes and taking medicines to lower your risk for a heart attack or stroke. This means:

- quitting smoking,
- taking medicines to keep your blood pressure, LDL (bad) cholesterol and blood glucose (if you have diabetes) under control,
- taking antiplatelet medicines such as aspirin or clopidogrel
- getting regular physical activity such as walking for 30 minutes at least 3 or 4 times per week,
- being referred to a special P.A.D. exercise program if you have pain or cramps in your legs,
- following a heart healthy eating plan that has lots of fruits, vegetables and low-fat dairy products and that is moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol.

For most people with P.A.D., these tips may be enough to control the disease and even improve symptoms.

When leg arteries are so clogged or narrowed that they are not getting enough oxygen to supply the muscles in your legs, *endovascular procedures* or *bypass surgery* may be needed to improve blood flow. These procedures often help to improve symptoms such as leg pain when walking. These treatments may also help to avoid losing a foot or leg due to severe P.A.D.

Endovascular Procedures

When a procedure is done inside a blood vessel or artery, it is called an endovascular procedure. In this type of procedure, a long thin plastic tube called a *catheter* is placed inside the artery. Using x-ray pictures as a guide, the doctor inserts the catheter into an artery through a small puncture in the groin about the size of a pencil tip.

Endovascular procedures are performed in a hospital or outpatient center by doctors with special training. Two common endovascular procedures are *balloon angioplasty* and *stenting*.

Balloon Angioplasty

To open a narrowed artery, the doctor performs a balloon angioplasty. A catheter with a very small balloon on its tip is placed in the artery and is threaded to reach the narrowed or blocked artery. The doctor then inflates the balloon inside the artery, pushing the plaque that has built up against the artery walls. The doctor inflates (blows up) and deflates (lets the air out) the balloon several times to push away the plaque and open the artery. Once the artery is opened, the doctor lets the air out of the balloon and removes it.

Stenting

Sometimes, the angioplasty is not enough to restore blood flow in the legs. In this case, the doctor may recommend placing a *stent* in the artery. A stent is a small, flexible wire mesh tube that is placed inside an artery and is intended to keep the blood vessel open. Over time, the healthy lining of the artery will grow over the stent, making it a part of the artery wall.



P.A.D.
Peripheral Arterial Disease
COALITION

**Saving Limbs
and Lives**

To find out more
about P.A.D., call
1-866-PADINFO
(1-866-723-4636)

or visit

PADCoalition.org

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Saving Limbs and Lives

The P.A.D. Coalition has united over 50 medical and vascular organizations to work together to improve the health and health care of people with P.A.D.

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What happens after an endovascular procedure?

After an endovascular procedure, you will need to lie flat for several hours without moving the leg that was treated to prevent bleeding from the puncture site. Many patients are able to return home the same day of the procedure.

After endovascular treatment, most people with P.A.D. return to their daily routine and a more active and independent life within a few days. To keep your legs healthy, it is very important to make the lifestyle changes and take the medicines needed to control your heart disease risk factors.

What kind of doctor performs endovascular procedures for people with P.A.D.?

There are several types of doctors who perform endovascular procedures. These include:

- Surgeons: vascular surgeons with special endovascular training
- Radiologists: interventional radiologists and interventional neuroradiologists
- Internal Medicine doctors: interventional cardiologists and vascular medicine specialists

Ask your health care provider to refer you to the best doctor to meet your needs.

Bypass Surgery

When there is a long and very narrowed blockage in a leg artery, the best treatment may be bypass surgery. In bypass surgery, a new blood vessel is attached to allow blood to bypass (go around) the blocked artery.

A healthy vein, taken from another part of the body, or a synthetic (man made) blood

vessel is used in bypass surgery. This is called a *graft*. When the graft is ready, the doctor makes a cut near the blocked artery. The graft is sewn to the artery above and below the blocked part. Once blood starts flowing through the graft, the cut is closed with sutures (stitches) or staples.

What happens after bypass surgery?

After bypass surgery, the health care team in the hospital will check blood flow to your legs and other vital signs. You will receive medicine to control any pain. In a few days, when you can walk on your own, you will be able to go home.

Once you are at home, you will need to follow all the instructions the doctor gives you for taking medicines and caring for your incision. Be sure to keep all your follow-up visits to the doctor. During these visits, the doctor will check the blood flow in your legs to make sure the graft is working well.

What kind of doctor performs bypass surgery procedures for people with P.A.D.?

Surgeons, including vascular, cardiothoracic surgeons and general surgeons, perform bypass surgery. Ask your health care provider to refer you to the best doctor to meet your needs.

What do I do if my symptoms come back?

Sometimes, arteries become narrowed or blocked again in the same place after treatment. This is called *restenosis* (ree'-sten-o-sis). If you begin to have leg pain when walking (claudication) or foot pain while resting, call your doctor. You may need a second treatment to reopen the artery and reduce your symptoms.



Remember: Finding and treating P.A.D. early can help keep your legs healthy, lower your risk for heart attack or stroke, and save your life and limbs.



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