

EXERCISING

WITH

PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE



Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) causes a reduction in blood flow to the lower extremities due to narrowing of the arteries, and can make walking and other daily activities both challenging and painful due to muscle cramping. Regular physical activity improves circulation to the leg muscles, reduces the pain of walking, and can even enhance your overall quality of life. Exercise reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, which often accompanies PAD. The key to maximizing the benefits of exercise is to follow a well-designed program that you can stick to over the long-term.

Getting Started

- Talk with your health care provider and rehabilitation therapist about integrating regular exercise into your treatment plan.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The goals of your program should be to improve pain symptoms caused by PAD and reduce your cardiovascular risk factors.
- While all aerobic activities are of benefit, walking is the best exercise for people with PAD.
- The best type of walking is where your pace varies depending on leg pain. Walk until the pain causes you to slow down. Then walk slowly (or if necessary, stop) until the pain subsides and keep repeating the work-rest cycle.
- Begin with as little as five to 15 minutes of walking or other aerobic activity. Gradually increase the length of your aerobic exercise until you can exercise continuously for 30 minutes or more.
- Aim to exercise at least three days per week and focus on increasing amount of time before you begin to exercise harder.

Exercise Cautions

- Regular physical activity may unmask heart-related symptoms. Stop exercising and contact your physician immediately if you experience any chest pain, extreme fatigue or breathlessness.
- Cold weather may worsen symptoms.

Your exercise program should be designed to maximize the benefits with the fewest risks of aggravating your health or physical condition. Consider contacting a certified health and fitness professional* who can work with you and your health care provider to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.

IN THE SERIES:

- > Cardiovascular Diseases
- > Pulmonary Diseases
- > Metabolic Diseases
- > Immunological/ Hematological Disorders
- > Orthopedic Diseases and Disabilities
- > Neuromuscular Disorders

*If your health care provider has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored in a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org or e-mail eim@acsm.org.

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