

Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD) Test

Peripheral artery disease (also called peripheral arterial disease) is a common circulatory problem in which narrowed arteries reduce blood flow to your limbs.

When you develop peripheral artery disease (PAD), your extremities — usually your legs — don't receive enough blood flow to keep up with demand. This causes symptoms, most notably leg pain when walking (claudication).

Peripheral artery disease is also likely to be a sign of a more widespread accumulation of fatty deposits in your arteries (atherosclerosis). This condition may be reducing blood flow to your heart and brain, as well as your legs.

Signs and Symptoms Include:

- Painful cramping in one or both of your hips, thighs or calf muscles, leg numbness or weakness, coldness in your lower leg or foot, especially when compared with the other side, sores on your toes, feet or legs that won't heal, a change in the color of your legs.
- Hair loss or slower hair growth on your feet and legs, slower growth of your toenails.
- Shiny skin on your legs, no pulse or a weak pulse in your legs or feet, erectile dysfunction in men.

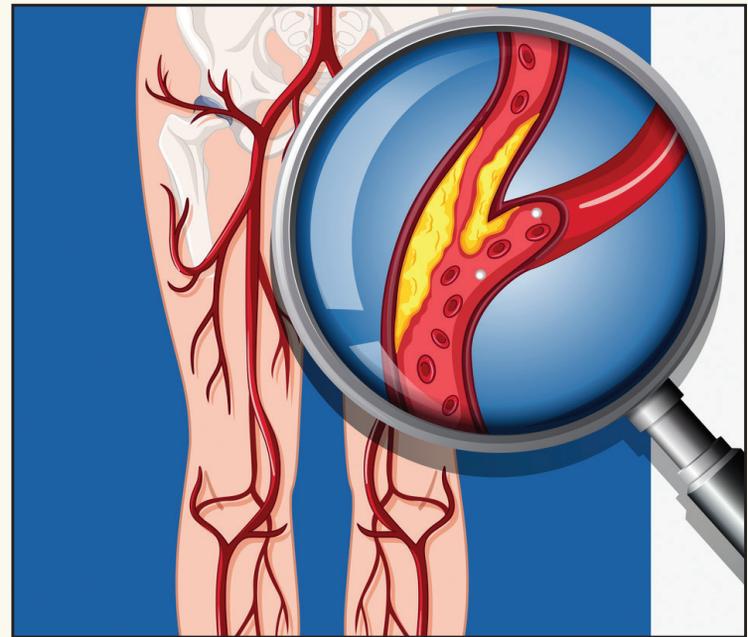
If peripheral artery disease progresses, pain may even occur when you're at rest or when you're lying down (ischemic rest pain). It may be intense enough to disrupt sleep. Hanging your legs over the edge of your bed or walking around your room may temporarily relieve the pain.

Even if you don't have symptoms of peripheral artery disease, you may need to be screened if you are:

Over age 65, over age 50 and have a history of diabetes or smoking, under age 50, but have diabetes and other peripheral artery disease risk factors, such as obesity or high blood pressure.

Risk factors:

- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Increasing age, especially after reaching 50 years of age
- Obesity (a body mass index over 30)
- A family history of peripheral artery disease, heart disease or stroke
- High levels of homocysteine, a protein component that helps build and maintain tissue.



Prevention

- Quit smoking if you're a smoker
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar in control
- Exercise regularly. Aim for 30 to 45 minutes several times a week after you've gotten your doctor's approval
- Lower your cholesterol and blood pressure levels
- Eat foods that are low in saturated fat
- Maintain a healthy weight.

PAD Test Details (ABI)

A simple, quick and non-invasive procedure, the peripheral artery disease test only requires removing the socks and shoes. Blood pressure cuffs are placed around the upper arms and the ankles. A small ultrasound device will then measure the systolic blood pressure in your limbs. Comparing the blood pressure in your arms to the blood pressure in your legs develops a calculation called the ankle-brachial index (ABI). The ankle-brachial index will indicate to the technician if you are at risk for developing PAD, and if follow-up with your doctor is needed. After your peripheral artery disease test results are reviewed by a board-certified physician, they will be mailed to you and the ABI of each individual leg will be noted. An ABI of 1.0 to 1.3 is in the normal range. If your results are in the abnormal range (which could be either higher or lower than normal), your results letter will indicate if you should follow up with your physician. Whatever your results on any of your screenings, you should always share your screening results with your personal physician.

Source: Mayo Clinic Staff