

Adventist Healthcare: Health Tip of the Week

Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD)

10 million people in the U.S. have Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD). Nearly 75 percent of those affected will never experience symptoms. Only a quarter of PAD sufferers are receiving treatment.

Description

PAD is an organic type of vascular disease caused by structural changes in the blood vessels.

· It is a circulation problem in which the arteries that carry blood are narrow or blocked. This is due to fatty deposits that build up in the inner linings of the artery walls.

These blockages restrict blood circulation leading to the kidneys, stomach, arms, legs and feet.

Symptoms

In its early stages, the most common symptom of PAD is cramping or fatigue in the legs/buttocks during activity. Such cramping subsides when the person stands still.

- Numbness, tingling or weakness in the leg.
- A burning or aching pain in your feet/toes while resting.
- A sore on your leg or foot that does not heal.
- A cooling or color change in the skin of the legs or feet.
- Loss of hair on the legs.
- Severe PAD can lead to gangrene.

Risk Factors

Men are more likely than women to have PAD.

- Those at highest risk include: over the age of 50, smokers, overweight and diabetic.
- People who do not exercise.
- A family history of heart or vascular disease.
- People who have high blood pressure or high cholesterol.

Treatment

More than 70 percent of patients diagnosed with the disease remain stable or improve with conservative management.

- Lifestyle changes to lower your risk include controlling both diabetes and blood pressure.
- Stop smoking. Smokers are up to 25 times more likely to get PAD.
- Be physically active. Include a structured exercise program.
- Eat a low-saturated fat, low-cholesterol diet.

Sources: National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, American Heart Association, Society of Interventional Radiology, Journal of the American Academy of Family Physicians, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.