



Cardiology & Cardiac Surgery

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DON'T IGNORE LEG PAIN

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD), which affects blood flow in the limbs, is a significant indicator of coronary disease, and a leading cause of reduced mobility in older adults. Interventional cardiologist Charanjit Khurana, MD, FACC, FSCAI answers common questions about PAD and why it shouldn't be ignored:

What Is PAD and How Common Is It?

Peripheral arterial disease occurs when the arteries in the legs develop plaque deposits and become narrower or clogged, thus compromising blood flow. It affects roughly 12 million people in the U.S., although most are unaware that they have it.

Is PAD Serious?

Individuals with PAD also have a 60 to 70 percent chance of having coronary artery disease, and therefore are at higher risk for heart attacks and strokes. Left untreated, PAD can also reduce functional capacities, such as the ability to walk, and lead to amputation in advanced cases.

Are There Symptoms?

Dull cramping in the leg muscles is a common sign. This pain may occur during walking or exercise and subside once activity stops. Other symptoms include fatigue, a feeling of heaviness in the legs, blotchy or shiny skin, and loss of hair on the limbs. If you have symptoms, tell your primary care physician. He or she may refer you to a cardiologist or vascular specialist for testing.

How Is PAD Diagnosed?

The ankle-brachial index (ABI) is a simple, non-invasive test that measures blood pressure in the arms and legs. The ABI can assess the severity of atherosclerosis (plaque buildup in the arteries) and predict the risk of future leg problems. Other diagnostic tools may be used to map the location of specific blockages to determine whether or not local therapy is needed.

What Are the Risk Factors?

Smoking, hypertension, high cholesterol, diabetes and age place individuals at higher risk for PAD. One in four people over 65 with high blood pressure also has PAD. Certain ethnic groups, including African-Americans and Hispanics, may be at higher risk.

Is PAD Treatable?

Exercise is the best medicine, in that physical activity naturally dilates the arteries to improve blood flow. Eating healthier, quitting smoking, and getting chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, and high cholesterol under control (via drugs and/or lifestyle changes) is also recommended. Serious peripheral blockages may warrant interventional treatments such as balloon procedures, stenting, laser therapy, cryotherapy, arthroectomy, or bypass grafts.

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Heart & Lung Fitness

Classes are held in the Cardiopulmonary Conference Room at 1625 N. George Mason Drive, First Floor. Please use Blue Parking. Pre-registration is recommended as classes are subject to cancellation.

Low Fat Diet for Cholesterol Reduction & Weight Loss

Discover how diet and exercise can affect both "good" and "bad" cholesterol levels as well as weight.

Thursdays, 5/7 or 6/4, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

How Stress Affects Your Heart Health

Learn to manage stress through relaxation, imagery and breathing techniques.

Thursday, 5/14, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

Techniques for Managing Shortness of Breath

Pursed lip breathing and paced breathing are just a few techniques that can help control shortness of breath.

Thursday, 5/21, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

Heart Disease & Circulation Problems in the Legs

If you have angina or had heart surgery, you should know risk factors and treatments for circulation problems.

Thursday, 5/28, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

Overview of Congestive Heart Failure

Find out the warning signs of heart failure and which medications are most effective.

Thursday, 6/11, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

Short of Breath Club

If you suffer from emphysema, bronchitis, asthma or any breathing disorder, join our free, informative lunchtime discussion group. Bring lunch with you or buy it in the Food Court. Family members welcome.

Mondays, 5/18 & 6/15

12:00 – 2:00 pm

John T. Hazel, MD Conference Center, Room C