



Living with Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)



Advocate for Your Health

If you have or think you have peripheral artery disease (PAD), it's important to take charge of your health and advocate to make sure you're getting the care you need. That's because PAD can cause serious damage to parts of your body, usually the legs and feet — and unintended bias in healthcare can make it more difficult to get care. **The good news? You can take steps to advocate for your health!**

Find a doctor you trust. You have the right to get care from a doctor you trust — someone who listens to you and answers your questions. If you're not satisfied with your care, ask another doctor for a second opinion.

Ask your doctor if you need an angiogram. An angiogram is a test your doctor can use to see what arteries are blocked and what kind of treatment might be most helpful for you.

PAD symptoms to watch for

Talking to your doctor about your symptoms is one way to advocate for getting treatment. Tell your doctor if you have any of these symptoms, which could be signs that your PAD is getting worse¹:

- Leg pain or weakness that happens with activity (like walking) but gets better after rest
- Numbness or tingling in the legs, feet, or toes
- Skin that's cool to the touch or unusually smooth or shiny
- Infections or sores on your legs or feet that don't heal

1. About peripheral arterial disease (PAD). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed May 20, 2025.
[cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/peripheral-arterial-disease.html](https://www.cdc.gov/heart-disease/about/peripheral-arterial-disease.html)

Learn about your treatment options. Treatment for PAD often includes walking programs and medicines, like blood thinners. Depending on how advanced your PAD is, additional treatment options include:

- **Angioplasty** — a non-surgical procedure that uses a stent (a small tube) or balloon, either of which may be coated in medicine, to open a blocked artery. Angioplasty is less invasive than surgery.
- **Bypass surgery** — a surgery that uses a piece of another blood vessel from your body (or an artificial blood vessel created in a lab) to make a new path around a blocked artery.

Ask your doctor questions about your care.

For example:

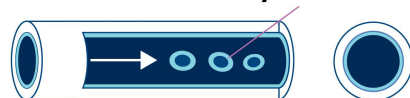
- Why is this treatment plan right for me?
- Is a balloon or stent an option for me?
- If I get a balloon or stent, will it have medicine on it?
- What can I do to lower my risk for amputation?
- Could I take part in a clinical trial to treat my PAD?
- Is there any new information I should share with my care team?

If you don't understand something, let your doctor know. Ask them to explain things in simple terms. And if you're more comfortable using another language, ask for language assistance — like an interpreter or written translations. Many doctor's offices and hospitals offer these services at no cost.

Bring a family member or friend with you to your medical appointments. They can offer emotional support, help you ask questions, and take notes.

Healthy artery with no plaque

Blood flows easily Red blood cells



Side view

Cross-section

Artery with plaque

Plaque blocks blood flow Plaque



Side view

Cross-section

PAD is when plaque (made up of cholesterol and fat) builds up in the arteries that carry blood from your heart to your legs. This hardens and narrows the arteries, which means the legs don't get enough blood. If blood flow is completely blocked, the tissue in your legs can die — sometimes leading to the loss (amputation) of your leg or foot.