

LIVING WITH PAD

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Living with PAD can be painful. Following your treatment plan can go a long way to reducing your symptoms and helping you regain the freedom you enjoyed before PAD. There are things you can do daily, in addition to your treatment plan, that will help you further reduce your pain and prevent long-term complications.

Take special care of your legs and feet each day. Make sure to keep them clean and dry.

Reduced blood flow to the lower legs and feet can make cuts and sores slow to heal and eventually, if untreated, these minor sores can become serious complications. Check your feet daily for sores or injuries and treat them right away. Contact your healthcare provider if a cut does not seem to be healing.

Keep your toenails trimmed. Wear properly fitting footwear at all times. That includes slippers.

Every day work to improve your circulation. Get up and move. Leave your work desk and walk around the office often. On long flights, walk the aisles.

Your healthcare provider may recommend you wear compression stockings daily. Make sure they fit properly and follow your healthcare provider's instructions for safe use.

Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight, losing even 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can help reduce the symptoms of PAD, help prevent the long-term complications of PAD and benefit your overall health in the future. Work with your healthcare provider to lose weight safely.

And meet with your healthcare provider on a regular basis to ensure your medications are working to improve your health and reduce your symptoms.

To properly monitor the progression of PAD, your healthcare provider may perform an ankle brachial test periodically. Based on these results and other tests, your medications may need to be adjusted.

Make sure to attend all of your scheduled appointments, get your blood work done regularly, and monitor your progress.

For some patients, your healthcare provider may recommend a procedure to help widen the arteries and restore blood flow.

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"They found out that my arteries were all clogged up in my legs. So what they suggested on doing was to do angioplasty to try to put a stent in my right leg first."

One procedure is called angioplasty. It involves inserting a tiny balloon into the blocked artery, and inflating it. The balloon presses the plaque against the artery walls, widening the artery so that blood flows easily again. The balloon is then removed.

During this procedure, a small metal device called a stent may be inserted. This stent will stay in place permanently, acting like a scaffold to keep the artery propped open, reducing the risk that it will narrow again.

Femoral artery bypass surgery is another procedure that may be recommended. Here, a healthy vessel taken from the leg or arm, or an artificial vessel, is grafted onto the artery above and below the narrowed or blocked portion. This new pathway bypasses the blockage, restoring blood flow to that part of the body.

Whatever treatment you and your healthcare provider decide is best for you, it is time to take PAD seriously. Find ways every day to reduce your symptoms and prevent long-term complications. Eventually, you will be able to do many of the activities you once enjoyed living with PAD.