

PAD TREATMENT: PREPARING FOR ATHERECTOMY

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When you have peripheral artery disease, your healthcare provider may recommend a procedure called atherectomy to restore healthy blood flow. Atherectomy may be an outpatient treatment, which means you arrive at the hospital the same day as your treatment and can go home later that day, or you may stay overnight.

Your healthcare provider will give you specific instructions on how to prepare for your atherectomy, but here are some general guidelines:

Be honest about all the medications you are taking. You may be asked to stop taking certain medications, including vitamins and supplements, several days before your treatment. And bring a list of your medications with you to the hospital for your healthcare team to review prior to your procedure.

It is important to let your healthcare team know as early as possible if you are allergic to latex, anesthesia, iodine or contrast agents, antibiotics or shellfish.

The night before the procedure, you may be asked not to eat or drink anything after midnight. If you are told to continue to take certain medications, take them on schedule with as little water as possible.

You may be asked to arrive a few hours before the procedure is scheduled. If not already done, any remaining pre-procedure tests will be completed.

An I.V. will be started to provide you with fluids and medication during the procedure. The place on your leg where the catheter will be inserted will be cleaned to prevent infection. Next, you'll be moved to the procedure room.

Throughout it, you'll be relaxed but not asleep. You'll be given a local anesthetic to numb the area of your leg where the catheter will be inserted. You may feel the sting of the injection, but you shouldn't feel any pain during the procedure. If you do, let your doctor know.

During the atherectomy procedure, a catheter, with a small, sharp razor attached to it, will be guided through the artery to the narrowed spot. The razor will shave away the plaque build-up, widening the artery so that blood flows easily again. Your healthcare provider may choose to use a laser instead, to clear the blockage.

The atherectomy procedure usually takes about one hour.

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Back in the post-procedure area, your blood pressure and pulse will be monitored and the insertion site will be examined. You'll be asked to keep your leg still and straight for a few hours after the catheter has been removed. You may bend your other leg to make your back more comfortable.

As you recover, you'll also be asked to drink plenty of fluids. You will probably be up and walking later in the day and can go home as soon as your doctor advises.

Before you leave, your healthcare team will let you know how to take care of yourself at home. You may be advised not to drive for the first couple of days after the procedure, so arrange to have someone take you home.

If you have any questions about atherectomy, meet with your healthcare provider. This procedure is necessary to prevent the long-term complications of PAD. Your healthcare provider wants you to feel comfortable and prepared for your treatment.