

What is PAD?

PAD is short for **P**eripheral **A**rtery **D**isease.

PAD happens in much the same way as a heart attack or some strokes. A heart attack or stroke can take place when the arteries of the heart or brain become narrowed to the point that blood flow is slowed down a lot or even cut off.

But with PAD, the arteries that carry blood away from your heart to other parts of your body (called the “peripheral arteries”) are affected. It’s most common in the legs.

PAD has been linked to heart attack, early death and even loss of a leg. That's why finding and treating PAD is important.



Who gets PAD?

Certain things (called risk factors) can make PAD more likely. If you or a family member has any of these, ask about PAD.



Older age (over 65)



Smoking



Being very overweight



High cholesterol



High blood pressure



Diabetes

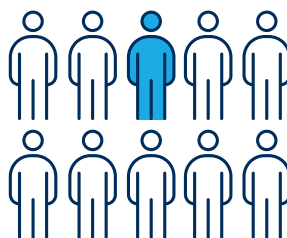


Family history of PAD



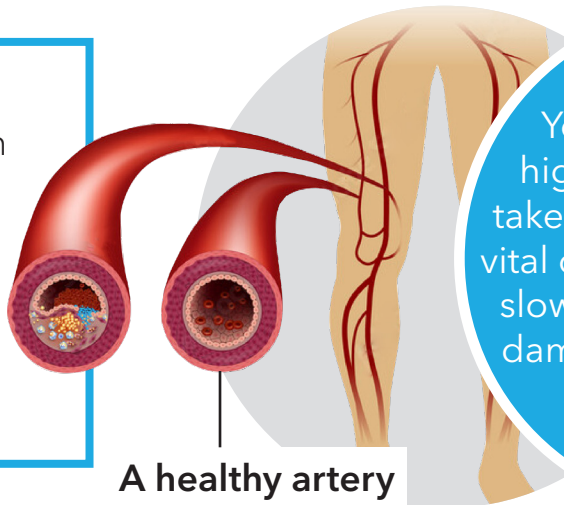
Black race

PAD is common, especially among people who are older than 65. But many people don't know they have it.



1 out of 10
people over age 40
have PAD in the U.S.

PAD occurs when blood isn't flowing well through certain organs or your arms or legs. It's most often caused by a fatty, gooey substance (called plaque) that builds up in the walls of the arteries



Your arteries act like highways or roads that take oxygen-rich blood to vital organs. If blood flow is slowed or blocked, it can damage the skin, muscle and other tissues.

A simple test can check for PAD

A test called an **ankle brachial index (ABI)** is used to measure – and then compare – the blood pressure in your ankle with the blood pressure in your arm. The pressure should be the same throughout your body.



This test can help tell if there is less blood flowing to the legs. Sometimes other tests to see inside the blood vessels are needed.

What PAD feels like

For some people, the first sign is **not being able to walk as fast or as far as they used to**. Others might say their **legs hurt or feel heavy when walking or exercising** but feel fine otherwise. Some have **no symptoms**. Call your doctor or health clinic if you have these or any of the following symptoms:



Leg pain or cramping in the calf, buttock, hip, or thigh



Cuts or sores that don't heal well



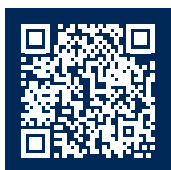
Cold or tingling feet or toes



Not much leg hair



Pale or blue-colored skin



For more information, visit CardioSmart.org/PAD.



You can also use the worksheet [**Could I Have Artery Disease in My Legs?**](#)