

Arterial Ulcer

An arterial ulcer is an ulcer or wound that does not heal because of poor blood flow to your legs and feet. This is known as Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD).

In a healthy body, the arteries are working hard to bring nutrient and oxygen rich blood throughout your body. In someone with PAD, the arteries of the leg are narrow or blocked. Oxygen and nutrients cannot reach the wound to repair the tissues.

With severe PAD, the part of your body not getting enough oxygen from blood flow begins to die. When tissue dies, a wound develops. Things continue to get worse because the nutrients and oxygen needed for healing are not able to reach the wound.

DIAGNOSING PAD

There are a variety of tests that may be used to identify PAD and help your doctor know how extensive the disease is.

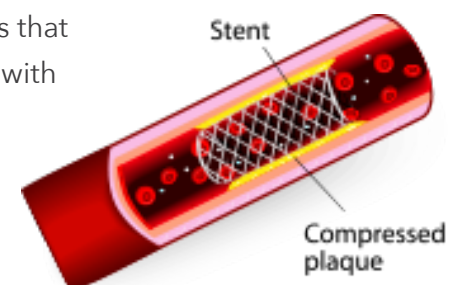
Your doctor may order one or more of the following tests:

- Ankle Brachial Index
- Toe Pressures
- Segmental Pressures
- Pulse Volume Recording
- Skin Perfusion Pressures
- Arterial Duplex Doppler
- Angiography

TREATING PAD

There are many options to consider in treating PAD. Oftentimes a surgery using angioplasty is used to open the narrow or blocked artery allowing blood to flow freely. However, surgery is not always the best option. In some cases, the use of medications and lifestyle changes are better options to improve PAD.

In severe situations that cannot be treated with surgery or medications, an amputation may be necessary.



THE PAIN OF ARTERIAL ULCERS

Arterial ulcers tend to be very painful. This happens when the tissue is not getting enough oxygen. The pain is sometimes improved by hanging the foot down. It worsens when elevated and can cause difficulty when sleeping in bed.

In your day-to-day life, PAD can affect your mobility and comfort. Walking may cause pain or cramping in the legs. Resting with your legs elevated may also cause pain. If your legs ache when lying down, this is a symptom of severe PAD. If it is determined you have PAD, your doctors will work together to treat and manage the disease.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

When you are at home you should monitor your ulcer. If you notice any of the following, call your wound center immediately:

- New ulcer formation
- Red streaks moving away from the wound
- Redness around the wound or the skin feels hot to the touch
- Wound drainage increases or changes in appearance.

To help your wound heal, follow all instructions from your doctor and wound care team. If you have a disease like diabetes, high blood pressure, rheumatoid arthritis, etc., it is important to manage your disease. Take all medications as

prescribed and do your best to attend all appointments.

Nutrition and exercise are also important when you have an arterial ulcer. Lower the amount of fat and salt that you consume and try to eat more fruits and vegetables. Walking is a simple and effective way to exercise. Keep in mind that when you exercise it should not feel painful. If you need to incorporate exercise into your lifestyle, talk to your doctor about a safe exercise program for you.



Smoking can cause or worsen the effects of PAD. If you smoke, it is important to quit smoking. For more information on programs to help you quit smoking, talk to your doctor or call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.