Get the facts on peripheral arterial disease (PAD).

If you think it’s JUST leg pain... think again.

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is a term used to classify all non-coronary arterial diseases. It is a buildup of plaque in the walls of arteries, which reduces or blocks the flow of blood to your limbs and other organs. PAD is most commonly seen in the legs.

Two out of three Canadians are not aware of peripheral arterial disease, a common vascular disease that affects as many as 800,000 Canadians, 50% of which are asymptomatic.\textsuperscript{3,6}
People with diabetes are two to four times more likely to have PAD.\(^4\)

### What are the risk factors?\(^1-5\)

- **Aging**
  The risk of PAD increases dramatically with age.

- **Smoking**
  Those who smoke or have a history of smoking have a greater risk of developing PAD.

- **Diabetes**
  One in three people over the age of 50 with diabetes is likely to have PAD.

- **High Cholesterol**
  Excess cholesterol and fat in your blood contribute to the formation of plaque in arteries, reducing or blocking blood flow to your heart, brain or limbs.

- **History of Vascular Disease, Heart Attack or Stroke**
  If you have heart disease, you have a one-in-three chance of also having PAD.

- **High Blood Pressure**
  Elevated blood pressure raises the risk of developing plaque in the arteries.

- **African or Hispanic Descent**
  Some minority groups are more than twice as likely to have PAD.

### What are the symptoms?\(^1-5\)

- **Cramps** in the leg muscles (buttocks, thigh or calf) that occur during activities like walking or climbing stairs.

- **Sores or Wounds** on toes, feet or legs that heal slowly, poorly or not at all.

- **Pain** in the legs and/or feet while at rest or that disturbs sleep.

- **Colour Changes** in the skin of the feet, including paleness or blueness.

- **Lower Temperature** in one leg compared with the other leg.

- **Poor Nail Growth** and poor hair growth on toes and legs.

Don’t delay sending your patients for a vascular assessment and consultation. Delay in vascular assessment and improving perfusion can result in amputations.

### References


### Additional resources

- Heart and Stroke Foundation
  http://www.heartandstroke.com
- Canadian Diabetes Association
  http://guidelines.diabetes.ca
- Canadian Association of Wound Care (CAWC)
  http://cawc.net
- Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (RNAO)
  http://rnao.ca/
- Canadian Podiatric Medical Association (CPMA)
  http://www.podiatrycanada.org/