

## **What is Intermittent Claudication**

Intermittent claudication is a symptom of peripheral arterial disease (PAD). Intermittent claudication is a tight, aching, or squeezing pain in the calf, foot, thigh, or buttock that occurs during exercise, such as walking up a steep hill or a flight of stairs and is relieved by rest.

PAD affects not only how well you live but also how long you may live. You may find that that you can't walk as far or for as long as you used to—and that's frustrating—but if you have PAD, you are also at greater risk for having a heart attack and stroke.

Exercise can improve walking distance and medication can minimise its risk factors such as heart attacks and stroke.

The pain may become more severe over time. You may even start to have pain at rest.

## **Causes**

Development of atherosclerosis

Claudication is most often a symptom of peripheral artery disease. The peripheral arteries are the large vessels that deliver blood to the network of vessels in your legs. Peripheral artery disease is damage to an artery that restricts the flow of blood in the leg. When you're at rest, the limited blood flow is generally still enough. When you're active, however, the muscles aren't getting enough oxygen and nutrients to work well and remain healthy.

Damage to peripheral arteries is usually caused by atherosclerosis. This is the build up of cholesterol and other fats, blood cells, and other cellular debris into abnormal structures (plaques) on the lining of an artery. Plaques cause a narrowing and stiffening of the artery, limiting the flow of blood. If the plaques rupture, a blood clot can form further reducing blood flow.

## **Risk factors**

The risk factors for peripheral artery disease and claudication include the following:

- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure

- Obesity (a body mass index, or BMI, over 30)
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease
- Age older than 70 years
- Age older than 50 years if you also smoke or have diabetes
- A family history of atherosclerosis, peripheral artery disease or claudication

## **Complications**

Claudication is generally considered a warning of significant atherosclerosis in the circulatory system, indicating an increased risk of heart attack or stroke.

## **Prevention**

The best way to prevent claudication is to maintain a healthy lifestyle and control certain medical conditions. That means:

- Stop smoking
- Set up and establish a regular exercise routine
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet
- Maintain a healthy weight
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar in good control
- Keep cholesterol and blood pressure within normal values
- Medication includes an antiplatelet (a drug to help thin the blood) and statin (helps reduce the bad fats in your blood)