

Save Legs.
Change Lives.™

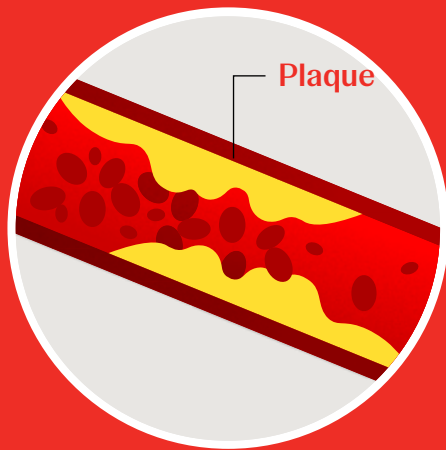
Important conversations about peripheral artery disease (PAD)

Understanding PAD and its risk factors can be overwhelming. This guide will help make PAD conversations as easy as possible when talking about the disease with family, friends and your healthcare provider. In this guide, you will find three helpful sections:

01 How to talk to a loved one who may be at risk for PAD

02 How to talk to your healthcare provider about PAD

03 How to talk to your family and friends about a PAD diagnosis



What you need to know about PAD

PAD is a cardiovascular disease that is often unseen, underdiagnosed and undertreated.¹ It occurs when arteries, which carry blood throughout your body, become clogged with plaque.² Plaque is made of fat and cholesterol that can build up in the walls of the arteries that supply blood to your limbs. When this buildup creates blockage in blood flow, usually in the legs, it is called PAD.²

Getting screened for PAD early on is a critical step that can reduce risk of serious outcomes, such as amputation. A standard screening method for PAD is called Ankle-Brachial Index, or ABI. It is simple, noninvasive and includes a blood pressure cuff on the ankle and upper arm to compare the blood flow.³ In some cases, your provider may refer you to a vascular specialist for additional testing or treatment options to help restore blood flow.

Some risk factors make you more likely to develop PAD. These include^{4,5}:



Heart disease



High blood pressure



Obesity



High cholesterol



Diabetes



Family history of heart disease, PAD or stroke



History of smoking

If any of the above are relevant to you, talk to your doctor about your PAD risk—and ask if you should see a vascular specialist. Earlier diagnosis and treatment can help you stay ahead of serious complications.

How to talk to your healthcare provider about PAD

If you think that you or your loved one might be at risk for PAD, it's time to talk to a healthcare provider about a vascular evaluation. The following section will help make the conversation with your healthcare provider as easy as possible. Print this guide and bring it to your appointment to make sure you get all the answers you need.



Reminder

Testing for PAD is simple, noninvasive and can be done in minutes. Please take your socks and shoes off BEFORE the doctor enters the room! This ensures you'll be ready for your PAD exam.

Understanding PAD

Here are some questions to ask your doctor to help you better understand PAD^{4,5}:

1. I sometimes have pain in my legs when I walk or exercise. Could I have PAD?

2. Does PAD put me at risk of developing other heart or vascular diseases? If so, what can I do about it?

3. Can you check the pulses in my feet?

4. Are there any additional tests I should have that will provide more information?

Treating PAD

If you've been diagnosed with PAD, know that it is treatable. Here are some questions to ask about treatment⁶:

1. Has my PAD advanced to chronic limb-threatening ischemia, a severe form of PAD in combination with rest pain, gangrene or a lower limb ulceration for over two weeks?

2. What are the different treatment approaches—including procedures—that I should know about?

3. What are the pros and cons of those options?

4. Am I at risk for leg amputation, or surgical removal of my leg(s)?

5. What else do I need to know about managing and treating my PAD?

Managing PAD

If your doctor thinks you may have PAD, here are some questions you can ask to help manage your condition:

1. I know exercise helps, but how can I do that with pain in my legs?

2. How much should I exercise?

3. When my legs are in pain, will walking cause further damage?

4. How can I help reduce my blood pressure?

5. What can I do to lower my cholesterol?

6. What resources and support are available to help me quit smoking?

7. I know diet plays a role. What foods should I be eating and what should I avoid?

How to talk to a loved one who may be at risk for PAD

This section will help you inform a family member or a friend of their potential risk for PAD:


Explaining PAD

When having a conversation to inform a loved one about PAD, follow these four steps:

1. Provide an overview of what PAD is to help them understand the disease. Find helpful information to explain PAD on page one in the What you Need to Know about PAD section
2. Go through the *Save Legs. Change Lives.*™ **risk assessment form** together to identify potential risk factors that may put them at increased risk of PAD
3. Help them understand the signs and symptoms to look out for and ask if they are currently experiencing any of these symptoms
4. Discuss next steps to take action together

Spotting the signs

Help your family or friends understand the signs and symptoms of PAD that they should look out for. Here are some symptoms to watch out for^{4,5}:

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- 01 Dry or discolored skin
 - 02 Foot sores
 - 03 Numbness, weakness or heaviness in legs or feet
 - 04 Loss of leg hair
 - 05 Painful leg cramping
 - 06 Resting leg pain

Taking action

Once you have informed your family and friends about PAD, talk about next steps:

- Encourage your family and friends to talk to a healthcare provider about PAD and their potential risks, and to get a vascular evaluation. Offer to attend the appointment with them
- Continue to keep an eye out for signs and symptoms that your loved one may have
- Educate other family, friends and community members about PAD



How to talk to your family and friends about a PAD diagnosis

If you were recently diagnosed with PAD, this section will help you tell your family and friends about your diagnosis. Bring up the conversation when you feel most comfortable!

Getting support

Not sure where or when to have a conversation with family and friends about PAD? See tips below.

Where will you have this conversation?

- Think about a few places where you plan to have these conversations
- Bring this document to the conversation so you can look back at your doctor's responses and the visuals provided throughout this guide that help explain PAD
- Choose somewhere you feel comfortable, potentially while doing an activity together, such as after church, having a meal together, or while cooking
- If you need to discuss your PAD diagnosis over a phone call, let your loved one know in advance so they can plan to have the time to discuss

Who will you share your diagnosis with?

- Consider a few friends and family who you are comfortable sharing this with
- We recommend having one-on-one conversations with your friends and family about PAD

What lifestyle changes are you going to make that they can help you with?

- Think about lifestyle changes that your healthcare provider recommended that your family and friends can make with you or help you with
- These changes may include changing your diet and cooking habits or starting to exercise³



References:

1. Afzal N, Sohn S, Scott CG, et al. Surveillance of peripheral arterial disease cases using natural language processing of clinical notes. *AMIA Jt Summits Transl Sci Proc.* 2017;28-36.
2. American Heart Association. About peripheral artery disease (PAD). Accessed July 23, 2025. <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/peripheral-artery-disease/about-peripheral-artery-disease-pad>
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5. Hirsch AT. Peripheral arterial disease detection, awareness, and treatment in primary care. *JAMA.* 2001;286(11):1317. doi:10.1001/jama.286.11.1317
6. Olin JW, Sealove BA. Peripheral artery disease: current insight into the disease and its diagnosis and management. *Mayo Clin Proc.* 2010;85(7):678-692. doi:10.4065/mcp.2010.0133

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