

Being Active When You Have Peripheral Arterial Disease

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Do you want to feel better, move better and sleep better? Inactive people who start moving get the biggest bang for their buck. Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes!

People with peripheral arterial disease (PAD) often try to avoid leg pain by limiting physical activity. This leads to even more pain, tiredness, low stamina and poor heart health. But doing the right

kind of exercise training can improve your ability to walk farther and faster – without pain. Studies show that participating in a supervised PAD exercise program helps lessen the amount of aching or cramping you have in your calves, butt or thighs when walking.

Regular physical activity:

- Increases your energy and slows the effects of aging
- Helps keep your mind sharp as you get older and reduces your risk of dementia and Alzheimer's
- Lowers your risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, several kinds of cancer and weight gain



Getting Started

Talk with Your Doctor

Ask your health care provider about a referral to a PAD/ cardiac rehabilitation program (may be covered by health insurance). People who complete supervised exercise training get the best results.

Motivation

Think of 2 or 3 personally meaningful goals you'd like to achieve through becoming active. For example, you may want to be able to get back to an activity that you haven't done since developing PAD or walk farther without cramping.

Keep It Simple

Sit less and move around more! Walk to the mailbox. Dance in the kitchen. Take the stairs. Walk the dog. Find opportunities to move throughout your day. It all adds up.

Be Active with a Friend

Do activities you enjoy and find a buddy at home or at work. Those who exercise with a friend tend to stick with it longer than those who go it alone.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing to improve your stamina. At first you may have trouble going for a long time because of leg pain, but it will get better. Do intermittent walking –followed by sitting – until you are completely free of symptoms. Then go again. Gradually build up to doing 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (like a brisk walk, cycling, using an elliptical trainer or water exercise).

What?

Intervals of weight-bearing aerobic activity

How often?

3-5 days a week

How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard. Go to the point of moderate pain (2 out of 4 on the leg pain scale). Rest and repeat.

How much?

Gradually build up to 30-50 minutes (not including rest time).

Remember: Fit in 5 or 10 minutes here and there. Or go for 20-30 minutes. Be active however and wherever you can.

Aerobic Activity Tips and Cautions

- Perform interval training at least 3 days/week. Start with 2 repeats and gradually add more cycles. For example, walk briskly to the point of pain and then stop to let yourself totally recover. Go again. It will gradually get easier. Try using walking poles.
- Water exercise (such as walking in water) massages your legs to improve your circulation and makes exercise more comfortable so you can go longer.
- Try circuit training. You do short intervals of aerobic activity between each of 8-12 strength exercises. Circuit training has been shown to be good for those with PAD. It can be easier to stick with it and fun too! Get guidance from a certified exercise professional.
- Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exercise. Staying hydrated may help reduce your claudication pain.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow. Warm up and cool down for a few minutes at an easy pace before and after exercise.

Do a variety of activities such as cycling, rowing or water exercise/swimming to help you work around your leg symptoms. You'll improve your heart health and have more fun! right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

Strength Training

Strength training improves your health and muscle control. Plus, strength training can make daily activities like lifting laundry baskets or doing yardwork easier and safer.

What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines or your own body (for example, kitchen counter push-ups or chair sit-to-stands).

How often?

At least 2-3 days/week. *Rest day in between.

How hard?

Start with light effort and build to moderate effort (about 60% - 80%) over time.

How much?

2-3 sets, 8-12 reps (focus on large muscle groups, particularly legs).

Remember: Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. If you need it, get help from a certified exercise professional. They can teach you the right way to do the exercises.

Other Types of Physical Activity

Intermittent aerobic weight-bearing activity is at the heart of a program for those with PAD. But you may enjoy and benefit from these other options.

Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates

All help balance, flexibility and strength, and are relaxing too!

Flexibility Exercises

Stretch muscles for 10 -30 seconds (30 - 60 seconds for older adults), 2-3 days/week (daily is best). For example, stretch your calves and the back of your thighs.

Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Tend your garden. Play ping pong. Dance. Play outdoors with your kids and grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.

Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker. Count your steps daily for the first few weeks. Slowly build to 2,000 more daily steps than you're doing now. Good job! Then aim for 7,000 - 9,000 steps/day.

More Help

Try this website: cardiosmart.org/News-and-Events/2011/02/Exercise-for-PAD-Trying-it-at-Home

Go to acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro to find an ACSM certified exercise professional near you.

How will I get started **this week?** _____
