

PAD PATIENT/HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL

Discussion Guide

Prepare so you can get the most out of your appointment.



Learn as much as you can about your condition.



Know your symptoms and your family's health history.



Highlight or check off questions to ask your doctor.

PAD, or peripheral artery disease, is a narrowing of the inside of the peripheral arteries that carry blood away from the heart to other parts of the body. It is caused primarily by the buildup of fatty plaque in the arteries. The most common type is lower-extremity PAD, in which blood flow is reduced to the legs and feet. Left untreated, it may increase your risk of coronary artery disease, heart attack and stroke.

Be sure to discuss your family history of heart disease (including PAD), diabetes, kidney disease, high blood pressure or high cholesterol and if you have ever smoked.

PAD can often be misdiagnosed, and you may need to bring up vascular concerns or ask to see a vascular specialist.

The most common PAD symptoms are burning, aching, cramping, numbness, fatigue or discomfort in your leg or hip muscles while walking.

Bring a list of questions.

Getting information from your health care professional about PAD is important. Check the questions you want to ask during your appointment.

Living with PAD:

What's the likelihood my symptoms will get better or worse? What might progression look like?

Can changing my diet help? Should I see a dietitian? What other lifestyle changes should I consider?

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Can medication improve my condition?

What should I do if I have new symptoms or complications not covered in our discussion?

How often should I visit a doctor to monitor my condition? Do I need to see a vascular specialist or surgeon? What's the difference?

Which danger signs mean I should call a doctor right away?

Can a walking program stop my PAD from progressing ?

If I have diabetes, do I need to monitor my blood sugar more often to protect my vascular system? Do I need to see an endocrinologist?

Are there other conditions that could worsen or be related to PAD that I should be aware of?

How can I best manage PAD along with any other chronic conditions I have, such as diabetes and high blood pressure?

Are there tests or imaging procedures I need to monitor the progression of my PAD?

Learning about treatment:

- What are the best treatment options for me, such as exercise, diet and not smoking or using tobacco?

- What are the differences between surgical and nonsurgical options?

- If surgery is recommended, how long will its effects last?

- How will I know when I need more advanced care or treatment? What will I be looking for? Do I need other arteries checked?

- Which medications are used to treat PAD?

- Can treatment “cure” me?

- What happens if symptoms, such as pain at rest, return?

For more information about peripheral artery disease, go to heart.org/PAD.