

Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) Walking Program

What is Peripheral Arterial Disease?

Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) is the narrowing or blockage of the arteries that carry blood to the arms and legs. This can cause pain and cramping in your legs when you walk, because the muscles in the legs are not getting enough blood flow.

Why is it important to be active when you have PAD?

Studies show that participating in a structured PAD walking program helps reduce the aching or cramping you have in your calves, buttocks, or thighs when walking. People with peripheral arterial disease (PAD) often try to avoid leg pain by limiting their physical activity. This leads to even more pain, tiredness, low stamina, muscle weakness and poor heart health. But doing the right kind of exercise training can improve your ability to walk farther, faster, and without pain.

How do I start a walking program?

Below are some tips to help you get started with your walking program:

- Examine your feet daily for redness and sores.
- Wear well-fitting shoes and socks.
- Walk at least three times a week.
 - **Do not** miss walking more than two days in a row, as it causes you to lose benefits of the program.
- Find a good place to walk; it can be outside or inside on a treadmill.
- Keep track of the number of minutes you walk on a calendar or tracking tool (see tracking tool on page 3).

- Ask a friend to walk with you and hold you accountable.
- Have fun and reward yourself for a job well done!

What steps do I need to take to get the most out of my walking program?

Step-by-step instructions for your walks include:

1. **Warm up.** Walk slowly for two to three minutes to loosen up your legs. Stretch your calf and thigh muscles in each leg for 10-15 seconds.
2. **Start walking.** Walk 3-10 minutes at a moderate pace until your leg pain reaches a 3 or 4 on a 5-point scale (see “Claudication Pain Scale” below). The pain may feel like a “Charlie horse,” a cramp, or tightness in your calf or thigh. You may also experience tiredness or fatigue.
3. **Stop and rest.** Allow your pain to improve which can take up to 3-10 minutes.
4. **Repeat steps 2 and 3.** After your pain is gone, repeat the walk and rest steps several times. While it may hurt, you need to walk fast enough to feel mild to moderate leg pain (see “Claudication Pain Scale” below). Your goal is to reach a moderate level of leg pain before you stop.
5. **Cool down.** Walk slowly for 5 minutes. Take a few minutes to stretch your calf and thigh muscles for 10-15 seconds.
6. **Keep it up.** Your goal is to complete the walking program 3-5 times a week. Try to build up to doing at least 30 minutes of walking per session. As walking becomes easier, increase the level of difficulty by walking up hills, going up stairs, or increasing the incline on your treadmill.

What is the Claudication Pain Scale?

Claudication is the medical term for discomfort or pain caused by too little blood flow to the leg muscles that you use to walk. The pain is often noticed in the calf but may also be felt in the buttocks or thighs.

The Claudication Pain Scale

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No Pain	1
Onset of pain	2
Mild pain	3
Moderate pain	4
Severe pain	5

How do I use a tracking log to monitor my activity?

You can use a table like the one below to track your physical activity each week. Post it in your kitchen or bedroom so you can see how much progress you have made.

Week:			
Date	Activity	Duration (minutes)	Notes
10/20/22	Walking outside	10 minutes	Pain in my thighs.

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 CVC Control # #1483

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