

# Peripheral Vascular Disease

Peripheral vascular disease is caused by atherosclerosis which causes a build up of a sticky substance called plaque inside the arteries of the lower extremities. This build up of plaque decreases the blood flow of oxygen and nutrients to the muscles and tissues of the legs and feet (this is called ischemia).

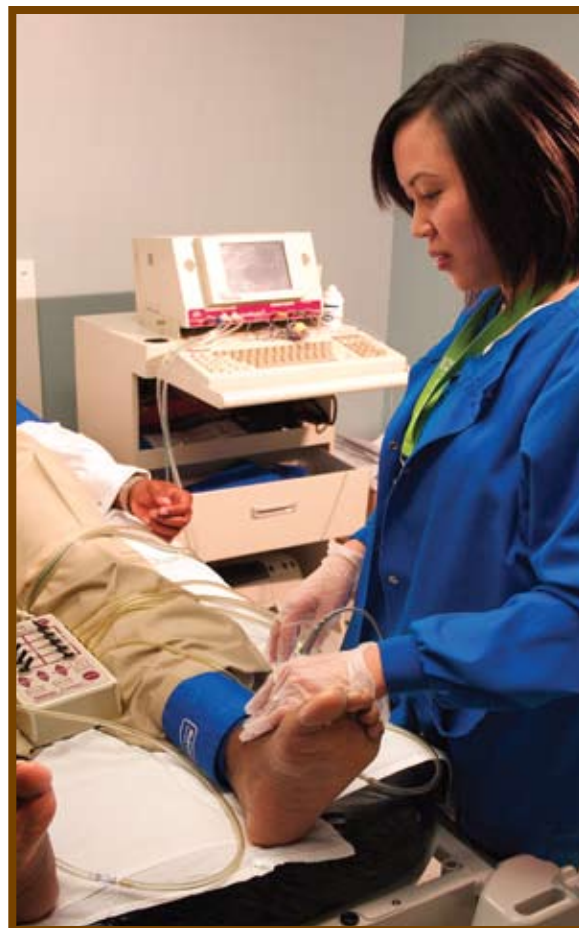
## Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of peripheral vascular disease may include:

- 1 Intermittent Claudication — cramping pain in the muscles of the buttocks and/or the legs that occurs with walking and exercise. The pain decreases with rest.
- 2 Pain at Rest — as arterial disease progresses, pain occurs at rest, and is often located on the top of the foot and across the toes. Pain is worse when feet/legs are elevated. The pain decreases when the legs are lowered and blood flow increases to the foot.
- 3 Tissue Breakdown and Gangrene — as arterial disease progresses further, the skin begins to break down and ulcers can develop. When tissues are unable to get the circulation needed for growth and repair, gangrene (death of the tissue) can occur.
- 4 Other possible signs and symptoms of peripheral vascular disease include:
  - decreased hair growth on feet/legs
  - paleness of the leg or foot when elevated
  - discoloration of the foot/leg when hanging down
  - decreased ability to spread toes and move feet
  - absence of pulses in the feet
  - coolness of the foot/leg
  - numbness or tingling
  - dry and/or scaly leg skin
  - leg ulcers
  - poorly healing leg skin rash

## PVD Screening: Ankle-Brachial Index (ABI)

Peripheral vascular disease (PVD), more commonly known as hardening of the arteries, is screened by using the ankle-brachial index (ABI). This screening is painless, quick and non-invasive. It will identify most causes of PVD.



## **What Can I Learn From This Test?**

The ABI measures the ratio between the pressure in your arms and the pressure in your legs. This ratio indicates how well blood flows to the legs. A ratio of less than 0.90 indicates plaque build up and possible PVD. A ratio of 0.90 or greater is considered normal.

## **How Is the Test Done?**

The screening is simple. After removing your socks and shoes, you will have pressure cuffs placed around your upper arms and ankles. A small ultrasound device will then measure the systolic blood pressure in your limbs.

## **Who Should Have the Test?**

Anyone who has risk factors for PVD should have this screening.

## **How Often Should I Get Screened?**

This is a personal decision based on your risk factors and previous screening results. Many people have an annual screening as part of their regular healthcare regimen.

## **How Do I Prepare for the Test?**

- Wear a short-sleeved shirt or blouse.
- Do not wear pantyhose.

## **About Your Results**

Your screening will be reviewed by one of our board certified physicians and discussed with you the same day of your screening. Your Primary Care Physician will receive a detailed report of your results in the mail.

