

DeKalb Medical offers vascular screenings that could save your life

As the owner of a human body, you have much to be proud of. When functioning properly, the human body is a fine-tuned machine. In many ways it is like a luxury automobile. Similar to a fine automobile, your body has multiple systems that must all work together to keep it running smoothly.



Ask The Doctor

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One very important system in your body is the vascular system. Your vascular system is a complex distribution network of veins and arteries that delivers oxygen and nutrients to all parts of your body. Healthy arteries have smooth inner walls and blood flows through them easily. Some people, however, may develop clogged arteries which can reduce blood flow or block it altogether.

One common cause of clogged arteries is the presence of a sticky material called plaque. Plaque is made up of various substances that circulate in your blood. These include calcium, fat, cholesterol, cellular waste, and fibrin, a material involved in blood clotting. As plaque deposits grow, a condition called atherosclerosis results. This condition causes the arteries to narrow and harden.

Although experts don't know for sure what starts atherosclerosis, the process seems to stem from damage to the arterial wall. This damage may result from high "bad" cholesterol, low "good" cholesterol, high blood pressure or smoking. It may also be genetic. Plaque buildup does not occur over days, weeks, or months. Plaque build up, in most cases, occurs over many years.

In order to keep your body performing at its best, it is important to do preventive maintenance. For vascular health, you should know about these common problems and the screening tests that can help detect them.

Carotid Artery Disease

The carotid arteries are located on either side of your neck and carry blood to your brain. If plaque builds up in these arteries, it can either block blood flow to your brain or break off and travel to the brain causing a stroke.

A **carotid artery screening** is done with Doppler color flow ultrasound technology to create images of the carotid arteries and measure blood flow through these vessels. The amount of plaque build up and the speed of the blood flow are tested to determine if there are any problems.

Peripheral Vascular Disease

Peripheral vascular disease (PVD) is caused by a build up of plaque in the arteries to your lower extremities. This build up decreases the blood flow to the muscles and tissues of your legs and feet and can cause pain, numbness and tissue death.

PVD is screened by using the **ankle-brachial index (ABI)**. 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.

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

Your aorta is the largest artery in your body. It starts at your heart and travels down through your body. A swelling or enlargement of your aorta in your stomach area is called an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). If it ruptures, it can cause serious damage.

AAA screening uses **ultrasound technology** to measure the size of your abdominal aorta. The abdominal aorta should measure less than 3 centimeters. If it

Lose the fat, Keep the flavor

Traditionally many of the foods that we love have been high in calories and fat and lacking in vitamins and nutrients. Luckily, you don't have to stop eating these foods. Their recipes just need a little remodeling. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- Prepare low-fat foods by substituting one ingredient for another (i.e., use 2% milk instead of cream, or olive oil instead of butter).
- Use a 2/3 to 1/3 Ratio – two-thirds (or more) vegetables, fruits, whole grains or beans and one-third (or less) fish, poultry or red meat per meal.
- Choose appropriate portion sizes.
- For those foods that are impossible to modify and still maintain the same level of flavor and texture (like a cheeseburger and fries), enjoy them only on special occasions and in smaller portions.

Over the next few months, DeKalb Medical will provide a series of traditional (not-so-healthy) favorites that have been converted into healthy yet appetizing



recipes. You will be surprised at how easy it is to turn nutritious into delicious!

Source: American Institute for Cancer Research

measures more than 3 centimeters, an aneurysm is suspected.

Just like tuning up your vehicle, your body requires periodic check-ups to keep it operating efficiently. At DeKalb Medical, we offer vascular screenings to do

just that. For more information or to schedule your screening appointment, simply call **404.501.WELL (9355)**. These tests will help you stay on the road to optimal health and could save your life!