

# PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE

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## ANATOMY OF THE VASCULAR SYSTEM

The vascular system consists of all the blood vessels (arteries and veins) in the body. Blood vessels allow blood to be distributed to the organs by being propelled by a pump, which is the heart. Arteries run from the heart to supply oxygen to all the organs of the body. The veins bring the blood used by the organs back to the heart.

## WHAT IS PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE (PAD)?

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) occurs when the arteries that carry blood to the legs become narrowed or blocked due to atherosclerosis. Commonly referred to as "hardening of the arteries", atherosclerosis is caused by the accumulation of fat and cholesterol. This accumulation causes the arteries affected to lose elasticity and become blocked. The narrowing causes different symptoms in different areas.

### WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Overweight
- Lack of physical activity
- Diet high in salt
- History of atherosclerosis
- Family history of heart disease

### HOW IS PAD TREATED?

Modification of lifestyle habits:

- Quitting smoking
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Staying active
- Changing your diet
- Controlling or preventing:
  - High blood pressure
  - Diabetes
  - High cholesterol

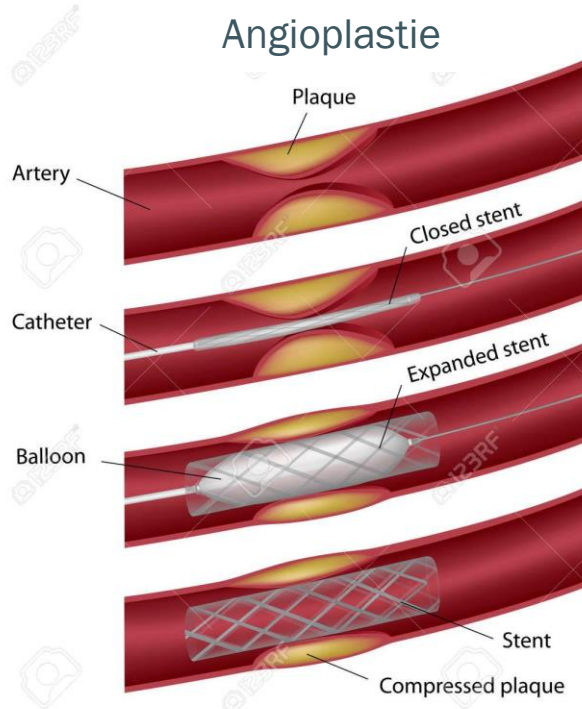
## MEDICATION

In Canada, there are no medications specifically for peripheral arterial disease. Good control of your diabetes, blood pressure, or cholesterol, however, is essential to prevent and limit the progression of the disease. If your doctor has prescribed medication to help control these problems, it is important to take it as directed.

If your peripheral arterial disease is quite severe, you may be offered percutaneous angioplasty or surgery. Your surgeon will discuss with you the most appropriate procedure for you.

## ANGIOPLASTIE (DILATATION)

A catheter will be inserted in your groin. The narrowing can be reached through this access. A balloon is inflated at that location, which widens the artery and restores better circulation. Sometimes a metal spring, called a stent, is needed to prevent the artery from closing.



This is a one-day procedure. No hospitalization is required. You should not exert yourself for 48 to 72 hours after the operation. The resumption of normal activities is gradual.

## FEMORAL ENDARTERECTOMY

Femoral endarterectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the plaque that is causing the blockage. To do this, the surgeon makes an opening in the groin to get to the blocked artery. An incision is made in the artery where the blockage is located. The plaque, which blocks blood flow to the legs, is removed. The artery is closed with a piece of bovine pericardium.

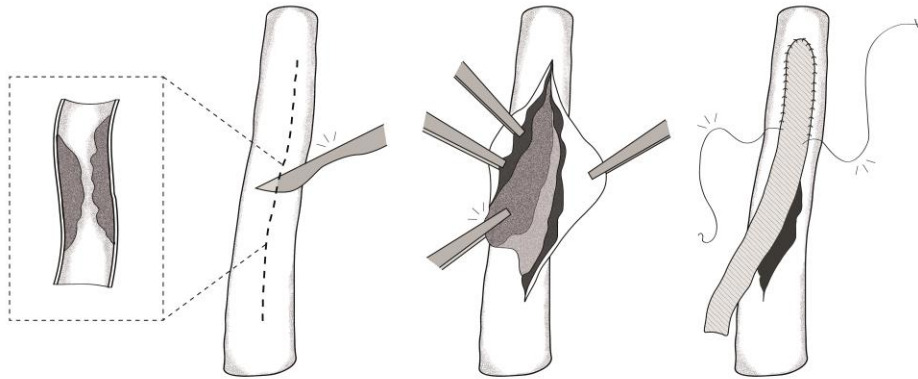


Image credit : Esther Marineau

You will have to stay in the hospital for one to three days. When you return home, you will be able to walk and climb stairs. You should refrain from exercising too much during the first month after surgery to allow the wound to heal properly. Limit your daily activities to walking during this time.

After the first month, you can engage in all the activities you want.

## BYPASS

A bypass creates an alternative route for blood flow around the blockage. The bypass is a superficial vein (saphenous vein) or a synthetic tube sewn above and below the blocked area.

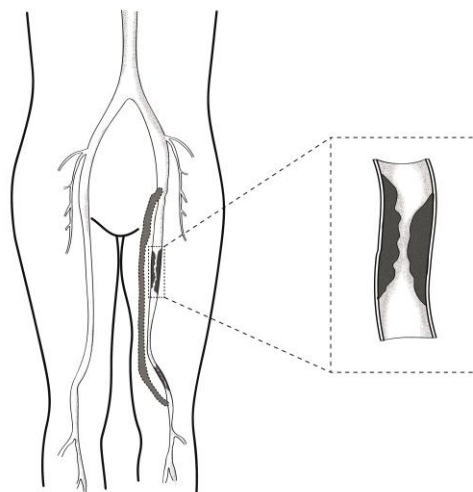


Image credit : Esther Marineau

You will have to stay in the hospital for three to seven days. When you return home, you will be able to walk and climb stairs. You should refrain from exercising too much during the first month after surgery to allow the wound to heal properly. Limit your daily activities to walking during this time.

After the first month, you can do all the activities you want. Complete healing of all the surgical wounds may take one to three months.

## IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS



Contact our team at 819-346-1110, extension 13085.



If you are concerned about your condition, go to the emergency room.

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### Revision and Layout

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