



Everett Foot Clinic

Peripheral Vascular Disease

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What is PVD?

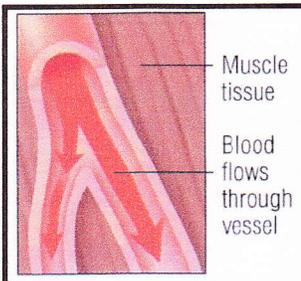
Does your leg hurt or become cramped while you walk or climb stairs? When you stop to rest, the pain may go away. But it comes back when you start to move again. This pain cycle is called intermittent claudication. It can be a sign of peripheral vascular disease, or PVD (also known as poor circulation). With PVD, the vessels that carry blood to your lower body become narrowed or blocked. This makes it harder for blood to reach your leg. If PVD is not treated, leg and foot tissue may die. This is called gangrene and may lead to amputation. You can help avoid such problems by working with your doctor.

What causes PVD?

As you age, your blood vessels may become damaged. Plaque (a buildup of fat and other materials) may collect along the inner walls of the blood vessels. The plaque can narrow or block your blood vessels.

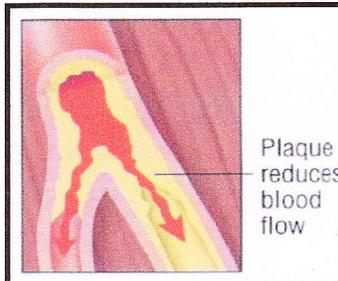
A Healthy Vessel

A healthy vessel allows blood to flow freely. Blood carries oxygen to the muscles. During activity, more oxygen is needed so more blood flows through the vessel. Leg tissue stays healthy if it receives enough blood.



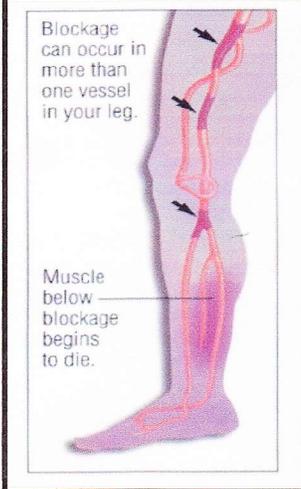
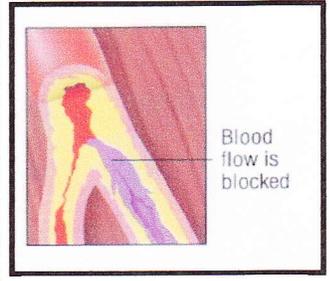
A Narrowed Vessel

Plaque buildup reduces blood flow. Muscle tissue does not get enough oxygen-rich blood. Leg muscles may cramp during activity. Cramping may go away with rest, then return when activity resumes.



A Blocked Vessel

Severe plaque buildup does not allow blood to flow. Leg muscles become oxygen-starved. Tissue begins to die. Muscles may cramp, even at rest. Night pains are common during this stage.



Diagnostic Tests

Your doctor may order some tests to see where your blood vessels are blocked. A Doppler exam uses harmless sound waves to produce an image of your blood vessels. During an arteriogram, dye is injected into your blood vessels. Then a series of x-rays are taken. The dye helps your blood vessels appear in the x-rays.

Physical Exam

Your doctor will ask you questions about when you feel pain and how long it lasts. Your blood pressure and pulse may be taken at your leg and arm to see how well blood is flowing. As foot problems can be a sign of PVD, your doctor will check the color of your feet and look for cracks or infections.

Controlling PVD

Certain health problems, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, make PVD worse. Talk to your doctor about controlling these problems.

- Stop smoking
- Control blood sugar
- Be more active
- Eat right

Protecting Your Feet

With PVD, less blood reaches your feet. As a result, you may develop foot problems. To help keep your feet healthy, check them daily for changes.