

Blood Vessel Disease

Blood vessel disease is also called peripheral vascular disease or peripheral artery disease. It is the narrowing of the blood vessels in the abdomen, legs and arms. Blood vessel disease is caused by a build-up of fatty deposits called plaque that narrows blood vessels. When the blood vessels narrow, less oxygen-rich blood gets to your body parts. This can cause tissue and cell death. Blood vessel disease is the leading cause of amputations.

Signs of Blood Vessel Disease in the Abdomen, Legs and Arms

- Muscle pain, aches or cramps
- Cool, pale skin, cold hands and feet
- Reddish-blue color of the skin and nails of the hands and feet
- A sore that takes a long time to heal or when scabbed over, looks black
- Loss of hair on legs, feet or toes
- Faint or no pulse in the legs or feet
- Pain with exercise that goes away when you rest

If you have any of the signs, call your doctor to get checked.

Risk Factors

You are at higher risk for blood vessel disease if you:

- Smoke
- Have diabetes
- Are over the age of 45
- Have high cholesterol
- Have high blood pressure
- Have a family member with heart or blood vessel disease
- Are overweight
- Are inactive

Your Care

Blood vessel disease may be prevented or slowed down with healthy choices.

- Keep your blood pressure in a healthy range.
- If you have diabetes, keep your blood sugar in a healthy range.
- See your doctor each year.
- Do not smoke or use tobacco.
- Exercise each day.

- Eat a diet low in fat and high in fiber.
- Manage your stress.

Your care may also include medicine and surgery.

Talk to your doctor about your treatment options.