

# PAD

## PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE

### WHAT IS PAD?

Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD), also known as Peripheral Vascular Disease, is a very common medical condition in which a build-up of plaque due to atherosclerosis makes it difficult for blood to circulate through the arteries.

PAD primarily affects the legs, but can also damage arteries in the kidneys, abdomen, feet, ankles, pelvis, hips, buttocks and arms. Carotid artery disease is a form of PAD in the arteries that supply blood to the brain.

### WHAT CAUSES IT?

Peripheral artery disease is caused by atherosclerosis, a build-up of plaque (fatty deposits and cholesterol) on the walls of the arteries. Over time, the arteries can become so narrow that it is difficult for blood to flow through to bring oxygen to the muscles, tissue and organs. Clots can form when plaque breaks off and enters the bloodstream.

### WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR PAD?

- High blood pressure and high cholesterol
- Heart disease
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Family history of heart or vascular disease
- Overweight (Body mass index over 30)
- Lack of exercise and sedentary lifestyle
- Over 70 years old (or over 50 if you also smoke and/or have diabetes)

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF PAD?

Not everyone has symptoms in the early stages of PAD. However, the most common symptoms are pain, cramping and discomfort in the legs, calves, thighs or buttocks. The pain occurs when walking, climbing stairs or exercising and usually goes away during rest.

The legs may also feel cold or numb, tired, weak, achy or heavy. There might be a tingling that wakes you up at night. In addition, the skin on the legs may become discolored.

### HOW IS PAD DIAGNOSED?

We will initially check the pulse in your feet and perform a non-invasive test called ankle brachial pressure index (ABI).

ABI is used to compare the blood pressure in your arms with the blood pressure in your ankles. Based on test results, you may undergo an ultrasound to evaluate blood flow.

If further tests are required, an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or CT angiography may help identify the extent of narrowing in your blood vessels due to atherosclerosis.

**Most, if not all, of the testing can be done in-office during one scheduled appointment.**

### IS PAD SERIOUS?

Severe PAD can lead to sores or ulcers developing on the toes, feet and legs that may take a long time to heal, which raises the risk for permanent tissue damage and amputation. PAD is also considered a risk factor for heart attack and stroke.