



HELP FOR DISABLING LEG PAIN

Many people shrug off leg pain as just a sign of getting older. But it is bothersome and can interfere with your lifestyle. Just walking or climbing the stairs causes leg cramping that makes you frequently stop and rest. At night, the pain in your feet can keep you awake.

But what most assume is a normal part of aging or arthritis may be signs of a serious disorder called peripheral arterial disease (PAD). PAD occurs when the arteries in the legs become blocked with plaque, restricting blood flow. People with PAD may have cramping in the hips, buttocks, thighs, calves and feet. PAD can also cause sores on the feet or toes that heal slowly, or not at all. A leg or foot may constantly feel cold because of poor blood circulation.

As disabling as these symptoms are in their own right, people with PAD should seek medical help for another reason, according to Dean Nukta, MD, an inter-

ventional cardiologist on staff at Fairview Hospital. *“People with PAD have a much higher risk for heart attack and stroke,”* Dr. Nukta said. *“That’s because if you have blocked arteries in your legs, there’s a good chance you also have hardening of the arteries that bring blood to the heart or brain.”*

EXPERT CARE

Fairview Hospital’s physicians are experts in diagnosing PAD and treating it with a program that includes lifestyle modifications, medication and, when needed, surgery. Fairview offers sophisticated endovascular treatments to ease symptoms and improve our patients’ quality of life.

Doctors diagnose PAD through a physical exam and a simple test that compares the blood pressure in your feet with the blood pressure in your arms to see how well the blood is flowing. Other tests can determine the location and extent of the blockage.

Doctors work with patients to change their lifestyle habits to slow the progression of PAD and lower their risk factors for cardiovascular disease. If you smoke, quit. Eat a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet to lower your blood pressure and blood cholesterol. Dr. Nukta also prescribes a walking program to increase circulation in the legs.

LATEST TREATMENTS

Sometimes surgery is necessary. To improve blood flow in the legs, doctors implant covered stents that are less likely over time to become blocked with scar tissue. They also may scrape plaque from an artery or use an ultrasound catheter to cross and open a completely blocked artery, potentially avoiding bypass surgery. *“All this is done with the help of new imaging equipment that enables our physicians to visualize the arteries better than ever before, improving the care we can provide,”* Dr. Nukta said. •

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Dr. Nukta is board certified in internal medicine, cardiovascular medicine, interventional cardiology and endovascular medicine. He is the director of interventional cardiology for the Cleveland Clinic, west market. He completed his medical training at the Damascus University School of Medicine in Syria and received fellowship training at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio, and the University of Geneva in Switzerland. To make an appointment, please call our Medline Physician Referral line at **1-866-733-6363**.

