

Peripheral Artery Disease

Peripheral artery disease is a condition in which fatty deposits build in the arteries and restrict blood flow. Most commonly, PAD minimizes blood flow to the legs causing pain and numbness. It restricts the ability to walk and in extreme cases can lead to amputation. PAD develops when fatty deposits build up in the inner linings of artery walls, choking blood flow and oxygen to the legs, feet, arms and other places.

Researchers at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University in New York discovered that people with low levels of vitamin D in their blood experience an increased risk of developing peripheral artery disease. The findings were based on a United States government survey of 4,839 adults who had their vitamin D levels measured, and underwent a screening for PAD to assess blood flow in their legs.

"Participants in the survey who had the lowest vitamin D levels had a much higher prevalence of peripheral artery disease," said Dr. Michal Melamed, lead researcher.

According to study results, people in the lowest 25 percent of vitamin D levels were 80 percent more likely to have PAD than those in the highest 25 percent.

Cigarette smoking is the number cause of Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD.) Smoking causes plaque to accumulate in the artery walls and increases the formation of leg artery blockages. Smoking even a half a pack of cigarettes a day increases the likelihood of developing PAD by 30 to 50 percent!

Smoking constricts (narrows) blood vessels and causes the blood to clot.

Peripheral artery disease increases the chance of having leg pain even while resting. It can also result in the loss of a foot or a leg, or of having a heart attack or a stroke. Statistics show that 50 percent of people who continue smoking will have a stroke or a heart attack or die within 5 years!