Diagnosis of Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)

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En Español (Spanish Version)

The most common symptom of peripheral artery disease (PAD) is pain and cramping in the legs, called intermittent claudication. If your legs cramp after walking short distances, your doctor may want to look for disease in the arteries that supply your legs. The physical exam usually consists of looking at your feet and feeling for pulses in your legs and feet. Tests may include:

- **Ankle-brachial index**—This is a blood pressure recordings in the legs and arms.
- **Doppler ultrasonography**—This is a small device that can detect blood flow using sound waves. The test is fast, painless, and harmless. This test may be done in a vascular lab at a hospital or in a vascular surgeon’s office.
- **Arteriography**—These x-rays are taken while dye is being injected directly into the arteries. The x-rays can show if and where blockages are located in the arteries. This test is invasive and is usually only done in severe cases of PAD or before surgery to locate the blockages for the surgeon.
- **Blood tests**—Your doctor will review your blood fats and/or your blood sugar. If either is elevated, it may be a treatable cause of PAD.

You will also be evaluated for accompanying problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and elevated levels of cholesterol and other blood fats.

REFERENCES:


The Cleveland Clinic Foundation website. Available at: http://www.clevelandclinic.org/.