

### How do other heart and blood vessel conditions affect my risk of PAD?

PAD is caused by [atherosclerosis](#), the buildup of fatty plaque on the walls of the arteries that occurs gradually over a lifetime. Because atherosclerosis affects all the blood vessels in your body, if you have one type of artery disease you are at high risk for other kinds of artery disease as well.

This means that if you already have one type of peripheral artery disease, you are more likely to develop other forms as well, including:

- [PAD in the legs](#)
- [Carotid artery disease](#) in the neck
- [Kidney \(renal\) artery disease](#)
- [Aortic disease](#)

You also have a high risk of developing PAD if you have [coronary artery disease](#) (disease of the arteries that supply blood to the heart) or cerebrovascular disease (disease of the arteries that supply blood to the brain).

Women with coronary artery disease or who have suffered a heart attack or stroke in the past are automatically considered at high risk for developing PAD. One study of 3,313 patients in the Framingham Offspring Study (53% were women) found that women and men with coronary artery disease had more than twice the normal risk of developing PAD, even after other risk factors were taken into account.<sup>1</sup> The more kinds of artery disease you have, the higher your risk of complications like heart attack and stroke.<sup>2,3</sup>

If you have other forms of artery disease, it is especially important that you take steps to get your PAD risk factors under control. Treatment of your existing artery disease can slow the progression of atherosclerosis and prevent PAD, heart attack, and stroke.

See also: [Other Heart Conditions & Vein Disease Risk](#)

### How can I prevent PAD if I have other kinds of heart and blood vessel disease?

If you have heart and blood vessel conditions that put you at risk for PAD, it is especially important that you take steps to reduce your risk. You can prevent PAD by making healthy lifestyle changes and taking medications to prevent or manage your risk factors, particularly [smoking](#)

, [high blood pressure](#)

, [high cholesterol](#)

, and [diabetes](#)

. See

[Preventing PAD: The Basics](#)

for steps you can take to lower your PAD risk.

It is also very important that you stick to your treatment plan for your other conditions. This means taking your medication as prescribed and keeping all follow-up appointments with your doctors. Following your treatment plan closely can prevent heart attack and stroke and keep your heart working as well as possible. All women with artery disease should take daily aspirin to prevent heart attack and stroke, but always talk to your doctor before starting an aspirin regimen. If you have [heart failure](#) , [heart valve disease](#) , or [heart rhythm problems](#) , you may also benefit from stronger blood-thinning drugs to prevent future heart problems and blood clots.

Because women with other forms of heart disease are at high risk for PAD, you should also know how to recognize the [symptoms of PAD](#) and seek treatment if you experience them. The earlier your PAD is recognized, the better chance you have of avoiding complications like heart attack, stroke, and even death.

### References

1. Murabito JM, Evans JC, Nieto K, Larson MG, Levy D, Wilson PW. Prevalence and clinical correlates of peripheral arterial disease in the Framingham Offspring Study. *Am Heart J.* Jun 2002;143(6):961-965.

2. Criqui MH, Langer RD, Fronek A, et al. Mortality over a period of 10 years in patients with peripheral arterial disease. *N Engl J Med.* Feb 6 1992;326(6):381-386.
3. Steg PG, Bhatt DL, Wilson PW, et al. One-year cardiovascular event rates in outpatients with atherothrombosis. *JAMA.* Mar 21 2007;297(11):1197-1206.

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