

[PAD in the legs](#) can cause painful symptoms, making walking difficult and interfering with many aspects of your life. Because the process that causes PAD affects blood vessels throughout your body, women with PAD are at risk for developing other types of artery disease as well.

Treatment is focused on relieving your [PAD symptoms](#) (such as leg pain and reduced walking ability), improving your quality of life, and preventing [heart attack](#) and [stroke](#)

. The main components of treatment for women with PAD are:

- [Healthy Lifestyle Changes](#)
- [Medication](#)
- [Exercise Therapy](#)
- [Procedures to open blocked arteries](#)

Lifestyle Changes

All women with PAD will need to make healthy lifestyle changes to help control their PAD risk factors and prevent future problems, including heart attack and stroke. Many of the same lifestyle changes that can [prevent PAD](#) can also help slow the progression of the disease and improve your PAD symptoms.

If you have been diagnosed with PAD, you should:

- Eat a [heart-healthy diet](#) low in saturated fat and [cholesterol](#) . Eat plenty of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits.
- Exercise regularly — at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week
- Maintain a [healthy weight](#)
- Get your blood sugar under control and practice proper foot care if you have [diabetes](#)
- Get the help you need to [quit smoking](#) if you smoke

Medication

Lifestyle changes can go a long way, but many women will also need medication to control some of their PAD risk factors. Medication can also help relieve your PAD symptoms and reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Common medications used in women with PAD include:

- [Aspirin and Blood Thinners](#) – Most women with PAD should take daily aspirin to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- [Cholesterol Drugs \(Statins\)](#) – Help control high cholesterol. Statin drugs can prevent heart attack and stroke in women with PAD even if they do not have high cholesterol.
- [Blood pressure drugs](#) – Help control high blood pressure. Certain medications may reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke in women with PAD who do not have high blood pressure.
- [Drugs to Treat Leg Pain](#) – These medications can improve PAD symptoms and help you walk further without pain.

Exercise Therapy

Exercise therapy is an important part of treatment for all women with or without PAD symptoms. Exercise therapy strengthens your legs and helps you walk more efficiently. Women who participate in a supervised treadmill exercise training program can walk further without pain and are better able to perform daily tasks.

If you have had a procedure to treat PAD, exercise therapy will be a key part of your rehabilitation program. See [Exercise Therapy for PAD](#) to learn more.

Procedures to Open Blocked Arteries

For many women, lifestyle changes, medications, and exercise therapy are enough to improve PAD symptoms and reduce the risk of future problems. However, women with symptoms that have not responded to other treatments may need a procedure to open the blocked artery and restore blood flow to the legs.

[Angioplasty & Stenting](#)

Angioplasty and stent procedures open the blocked arteries from inside the blood vessels, without the need for a large incision. During balloon angioplasty, a long, thin tube called a catheter is inserted into an artery (usually in the groin) and guided to the location of the blockage. Once in place, the balloon is inflated, pushing the blockage against the artery wall and restoring blood flow. In some cases, a tiny wire mesh tube called a stent is left in place to prop the artery open.

Angioplasty and stent procedures increase blood flow to the legs, improve walking ability, and make leg pain symptoms less severe.

[Peripheral Artery Bypass Surgery](#)

Peripheral artery bypass surgery restores blood flow to the legs by redirecting blood around a blocked or narrowed artery. During the surgery, a healthy vein from another part of your body (or a synthetic artery substitute) is used to re-route blood around the diseased artery. The replacement vessel is called a bypass graft. One end of the bypass graft is attached to the artery above the blockage and the other end is attached below, allowing blood to flow smoothly.

Peripheral artery bypass surgery relieves PAD symptoms, improves walking ability, and can prevent amputation in women with severe blood flow problems caused by PAD.

Learn More

See [Living with PAD](#) for more tips and information on life after a diagnosis of PAD.

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