

Accident & Emergency
Department



Patient Information

Peripheral Vascular Disease
(Poor Circulation)

Peripheral Vascular Disease

Poor circulation to the legs is caused usually by arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries). It is quite common in older people, and the likelihood of it occurring increases with age. It is caused by smoking, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes.

The symptoms include pain in the legs usually in the calves but also in the buttocks and thighs due to reduced blood flow. The pain is a cramping or ache felt only when the legs are active and disappears with rest. The cramping [pain is due to the lack of oxygen to the muscle tissue. Some patients feel pain in the foot especially the toes and forefoot and heels. Unlike pain in the muscle, it affects the skin and comes on at rest. It is

generally worse in bed at night, is constant and hard to relieve. Other signs include loss of normal hair on the legs, shiny skin, nail changes, coldness of the feet and discoloration of the skin. Smoking and anemia aggravates this condition.

The legs are subject to thrombosis, infections, wounds that do not heal normally which can lead to ulcers and gangrene and loss of limb. Therefore keep a healthy diet with exercise, weight control, no smoking and elevate legs when possible. Consult your doctor if you have any problems especially unusual skin discoloration of the feet or sudden onset of pain. Care of your feet/legs is important