



## Lifesaving Tips to ...

# Prevent Blood Clots in Your Arteries

### What Is the Link Between Blood Clots and Peripheral Artery Disease (PAD)?

**Peripheral artery disease** is a common circulatory problem that occurs when your legs' **arteries** (blood vessels that transport blood away from the heart) become narrowed or clogged with fatty deposits, or **plaque**. When leg arteries are clogged, blood flow to the legs and feet is reduced. PAD may cause muscle pain in your legs when you walk, but many people with PAD do not have any symptoms.

This buildup of plaque in the legs' arteries means that people with PAD are at high risk for a heart attack or stroke. Eventually, the tip of the plaque breaks off and small blood cells called **platelets** clump together inside the artery to form a clot on top of the plaque. This is the same kind of clot that forms on your skin to stop the bleeding when you cut yourself. But when a clot forms inside an artery, it can

limit or even block the flow of blood to your heart or brain, causing chest pain, a heart attack, or a stroke.

The good news? Studies show that medications that help prevent blood clots from forming can help reduce your risk of a heart attack or stroke.

### What Medications Are Used to Prevent Blood Clots?

Medications that prevent blood clots from forming are called **antiplatelet drugs**. Aspirin is one example. These medications may be given to people who have experienced a heart attack or have chest pain or PAD. Your health care team will review your health history and talk with you to find out which antiplatelet drug is best for you.

### Are Antiplatelet Medications Safe for Everyone?

Taking antiplatelet medications is not safe for everyone. For example, some people

cannot take aspirin because it affects the lining of their stomachs, causing pain, nausea, vomiting, or bleeding. You should avoid aspirin and other antiplatelet medications if you have:

- An allergy or sensitivity
- A bleeding problem
- Liver disease
- Had bleeding in your digestive tract in the past few months

If you are having surgery or another medical procedure, it is important to tell your health care provider that you are using an antiplatelet medication.

For more information, review these related flyers:

- Title TK
- Title TK

# What Else Can I Do to Prevent Blood Clots in My Arteries?

Taking antiplatelet medications is only one part of a treatment plan to reduce your risk for a heart attack or stroke and to treat PAD. Making heart-healthy lifestyle changes is also important for keeping your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar under control. Steps you can take now that can make a big difference to your health and the way you feel:



**Follow a heart-healthy eating plan that includes lots of fruits and vegetables and low-fat dairy products.** Your diet should also be moderate in total fat and low in saturated fat and cholesterol.



**Strive to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week.**

*Remember: Finding and treating PAD early can help keep your legs healthy, lower your risk for heart attack or stroke, and save your life and limbs.*

## Questions for Your Doctor

It is important to work closely with your health care provider about your diagnosis and treatment. You can bring this form with you to help talk to your medical provider about any questions and concerns you may have.



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