

Peripheral Ischaemia

Podiatry Department

Patient Information Leaflet

What is Peripheral Ischaemia?

Peripheral Ischaemia is when blood vessels called arteries that carry blood to your legs and feet become narrowed and hardened. This reduces the amount of blood flowing to skin and muscles in your leg and foot.

If your skin becomes damaged it can take a long time to heal. Sometimes the skin may not heal at all, and a foot ulcer will develop.

A narrowed artery can also become blocked and stop blood flow altogether, causing gangrene. These events increase the risk of foot surgery and limb loss.

This damage can occur and spread very slowly, and you may not notice it happening until you have an assessment or develop a problem.

Who is most at risk?

Peripheral ischaemia can be a complication of diabetes, especially if you:

- have found it difficult to keep your diabetes controlled
- have high blood pressure

- have high levels of cholesterol in your blood
- smoke
- have a family history of ischaemia

What are the symptoms?

- Colour changes to your legs and feet.
- Pain in the feet, legs or buttocks at rest or whilst walking.
- Skin on the legs and feet can become thin and very dry.
- Foot and leg hair may disappear.
- Skin is more likely to become damaged.
- Feet and toes may feel cold and become pale or bluish.

How is it treated?

- Medication for reducing high blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol can slow progression. Often anticoagulants (blood thinners) may be prescribed to keep blood flowing.
- Surgical procedures to reduce or bypass narrowing and blockages are appropriate for some individuals.
- Safe self-care and monitoring.

Look after your health

- Take your medication and eat a balanced healthy diet.
- Try to do some regular activity such as walking. This helps to keep the blood flowing and make the most of the blood vessel flow you have.
- Stop smoking – this is one of the most important things you can do

Be “foot aware”

- Look for changes in the colour and temperature of your skin.
- Monitor any changes in pain levels.

- Think about what could have caused the problem and remove the cause.
- Ask someone to check your feet for you if it is difficult.

Looking after your feet

- You may need a podiatrist to give you advice and help with foot care. If a nail is rough or sharp, ask someone to gently file it with an emery board
- Use a moisturising cream daily to keep skin in good condition but avoid applying in between the toes as this can encourage fungal infections.
- Never use sharp implements or corn plasters.

Take care with footwear

- Have your feet measured to ensure shoes fit you correctly as footwear that is too large or too small can cause problems.
- Choose shoes the same shape as your foot – cramped toes are at greater risk of injury
- Full coverage footwear, rather than sandals, provide more foot protection
- Avoid unnecessary seams on footwear or hosiery
- Be cautious when wearing new shoes and slippers – gradually increase the wear time and look out for signs of pressure and friction.
- Avoiding skin damage and trauma should be your priority

Where can I get further advice and support?

Attend your podiatry appointments and contact us if you are concerned

Diabetes UK www.diabetes.org.uk

The Circulation Foundation www.circulationfoundation.org.uk

Spotting a foot attack

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Podiatry Department

Call **01384 321427** (9am-5pm, Monday to Friday) or e-mail dgft.podiatry.appointments@nhs.net

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru vă rugăm să sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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