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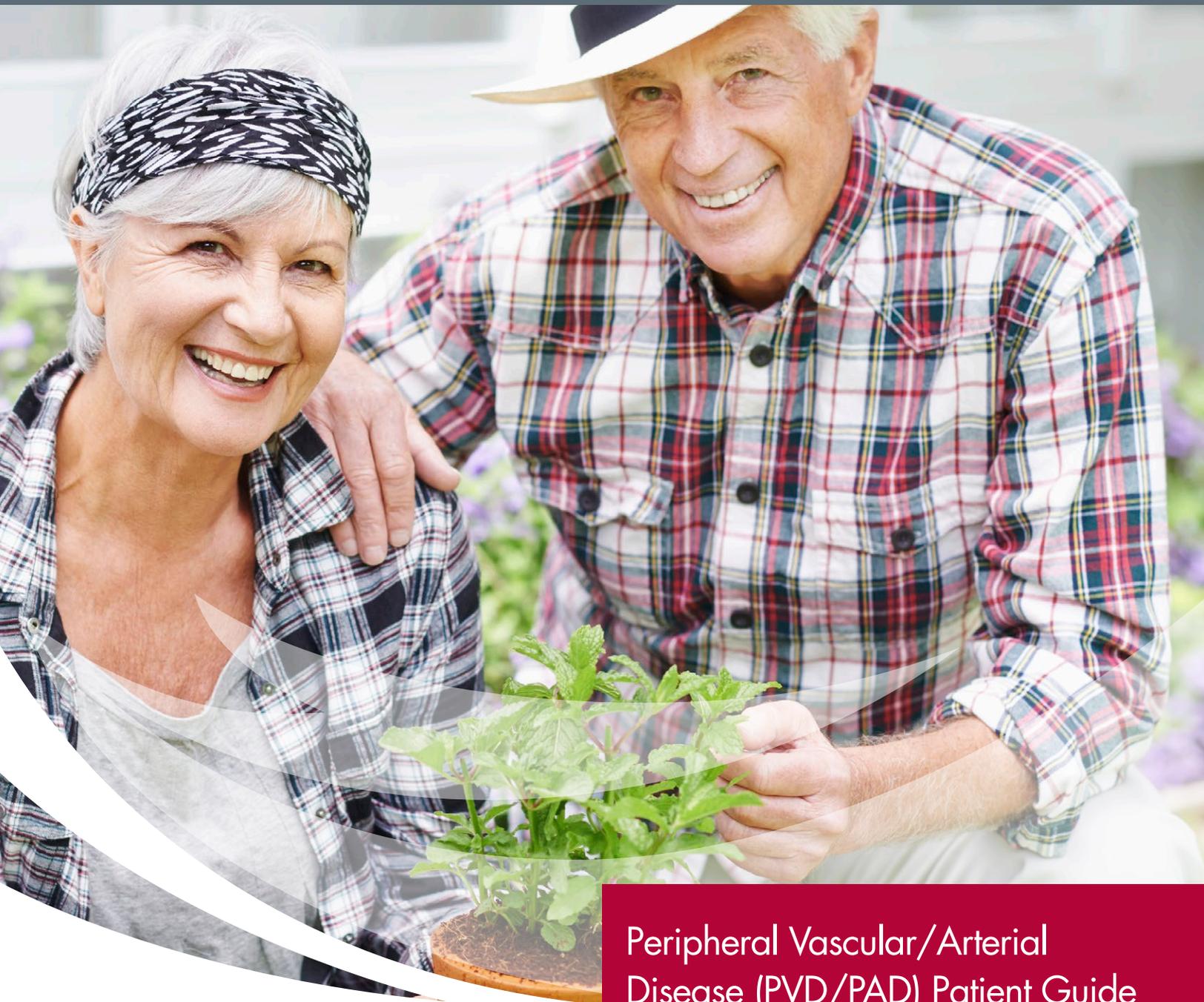
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Peripheral Vascular/Arterial  
Disease (PVD/PAD) Patient Guide



Heart Institute

## What Is PVD/PAD?

**The abbreviation PVD/PAD is used to represent** peripheral vascular/arterial disease. PVD/PAD is a condition where blood circulation outside of the heart and brain has been compromised.

PVD/PAD typically isn't something that occurs all of a sudden. Rather, PVD/PAD is a disease that has progressed in the blood or lymph vessels over time. This means your organs, extremities or both have been slowly deprived of their source of oxygenated blood.

Why is this a problem? Over time, this hardening of the vessels or arteries and restriction of blood flow can negatively affect nerves and tissue — and can lead to major health consequences, such as stroke, heart attack, amputation and more.

### Seeing the Symptoms

One of the hallmarks of PVD/PAD is claudication, or pain, cramping or discomfort in the legs. But there can be other symptoms. The following is a list of symptoms people with PVD/PAD have experienced:

#### Early symptoms

- Leg and buttock pain, tightness, cramping or tingling that comes and goes
- Cold hands, legs or feet
- Sudden high blood pressure
- Blood pressure that is unmanageable with medication
- Pain, aching or burning in muscles below the waist

#### Severe symptoms

- Pain from simple movement
- Inability to sleep
- Swelling
- Sores/ulcers that do not heal
- Skin color changes
- Loss of circulation
- Gangrene

Unfortunately, because symptoms of PVD/PAD can appear and disappear depending on your level of physical activity, many people consider it a passing nuisance. As a result, individuals may not know they have the disease, and PVD/PAD can wreak havoc on their bodies until serious health issues arise.

If you have any of the symptoms listed above, schedule an appointment with your Orlando Health cardiologist immediately.

**Over time, hardening of the vessels or arteries and restriction of blood flow can negatively affect nerves and tissue.**



## The Risks

**There is no typical PVD/PAD patient.** It can happen to anyone. But some people are predisposed to the condition based on both genetics and/or habits. While some of these are uncontrollable, it's important to know if you're at a greater risk for PVD/PAD — and if you need to make lifestyle changes to avoid it completely.

People who are over 60 years of age and smoke, may be at a higher risk for PVD/PAD if you have:

- Abnormally high cholesterol
- Been diagnosed with heart disease
- Had a stroke
- A history of high blood pressure
- Kidney disease
- A diet that is high in fat and cholesterol

It's important to note: If you are black or Hispanic, you are at an increased risk for PVD/PAD.

### By the Numbers

Now that you know the issue, you may be surprised to learn these statistics about PVD/PAD:

- Ten million people in the United States have PVD/PAD
- PVD/PAD occurs in 5 percent of adults over 50 and in 20 percent of people over 70
- Only 1 in 4 people are aware PVD/PAD exists at all
- Up to 40 percent of people never experience leg pain, which is PVD/PAD's signature symptom
- Smoking can increase the risk for PVD/PAD by 6 times

## Diagnosing the Condition

### The Tests

When you visit your cardiologist, he or she will perform a series of exams to diagnose PVD/PAD. These can include an angiography (a test using colored dye and X-rays) of your leg arteries, blood pressure comparisons between your arms and legs, ultrasounds, ABI (ankle-brachial index) and an MRI of your blood vessels.

Your cardiologist may also perform regular blood tests, treadmill tests and electrocardiograms (ECGs or EKGs), a measure of your heart's electrical activity.

### What Your Doctor Is Looking For

Your physician will look for a variety of warning signs when conducting your exam. PVD/PAD may cause decreased blood pressure in a specific limb, a weak or

absent pulse in a limb or a whooshing sound coming from an artery when listening via a stethoscope.

Your physician may also check for physical changes that appear over time, such as muscles shrinking, hair loss on legs and feet, sores, discoloration of skin (pale or blue), thick toenails and more.

### How You Can Help

One way you can contribute to your care is by tracking any symptoms and changes you've experienced over time. This is especially important with PVD/PAD because red flags can be present one day and gone the next.

You can use the chart on page 6 to track any symptoms. Then share these with your cardiologist at your next appointment.

## Medication & Treatment

### Prescribing a Solution

If your physician feels it's appropriate, he or she may recommend medication to help manage and maintain your health and wellness. Some of the medicines that can control PVD/PAD include:

- **Aspirin or an anti-platelet agent**, which can help prevent blood clots in arteries
- **Cholesterol-management drugs**
- **Other medications** depending on the type and severity of your disease

It's important to take all prescribed medications as directed by your physician. Do not start or stop any medication without talking with your doctor first.

### Other Treatment Options

In some cases, you and your cardiologist may agree surgery is the best approach. You have a few treatment options that could help in this instance:

- Venous ablation/phlebectomy/foam or liquid sclerotherapy
- Specialized balloon angioplasty: A procedure to open blocked arteries using a balloon catheter inflated inside an artery
- Lesion-specific stents and endografts: A minimally invasive technique used to insert stents and endografts to repair arteries and veins
- Vascular bypass surgery: The surgical rerouting of blood flow around an obstructed artery that supplies blood to the legs and feet



### What You Can Do Today

Here are some actions you can take, with consent from your doctor, to start moving in the right direction:

- Reduce your weight if you need to
- Quit smoking
- Eat foods low in cholesterol and fat
- Monitor your blood sugar regularly, if you have diabetes
- Get a blood pressure monitor and check your numbers throughout the day
- Take breaks to rest your feet during periods of physical exertion and wear shoes that fit









## Your Team at Orlando Health



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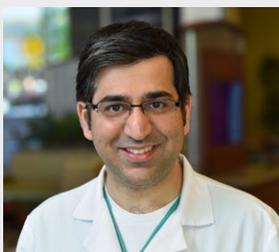
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