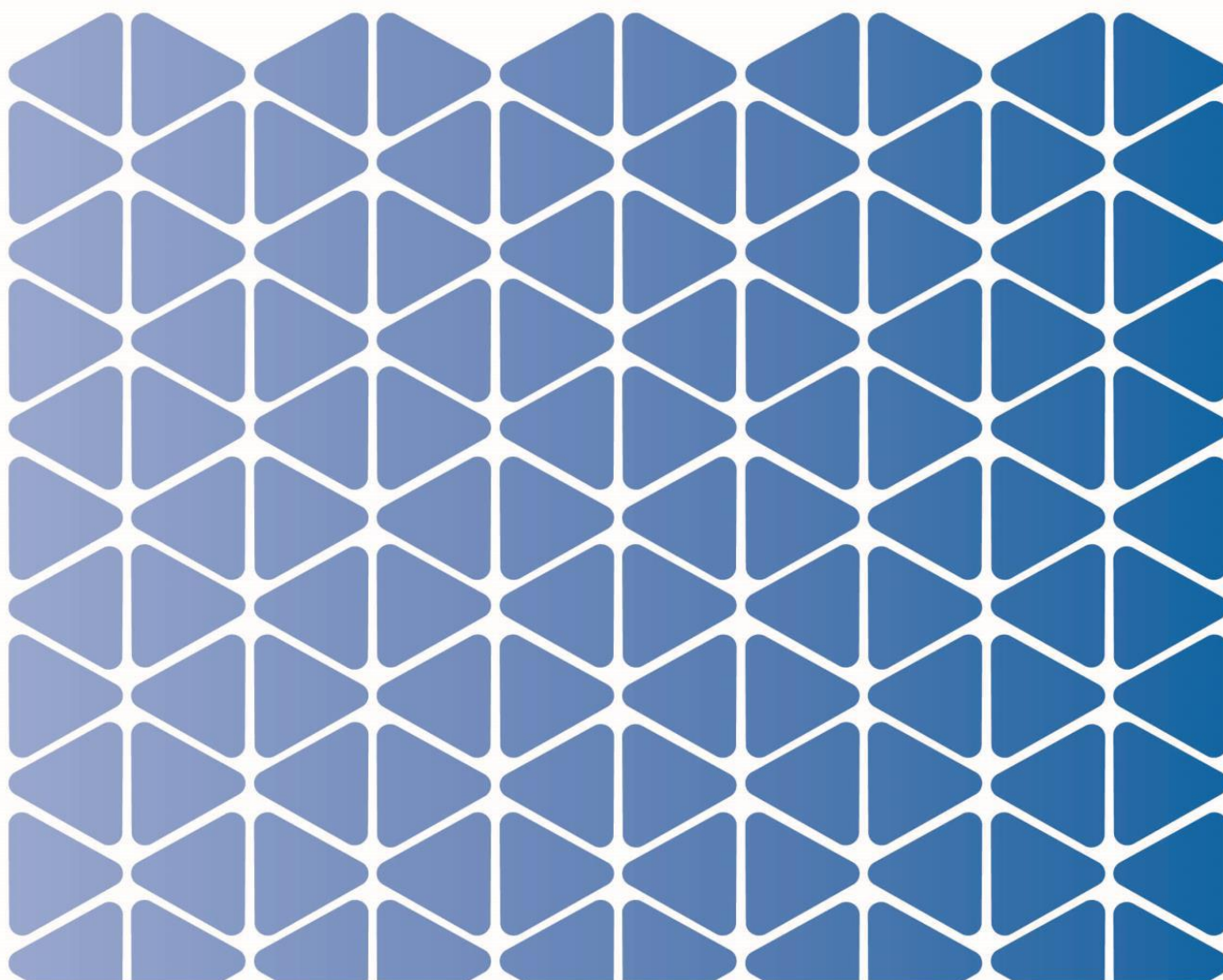




PATIENT INFORMATION

HOME-BASED EXERCISE PROGRAMME FOR INTERMITTENT CLAUDICATION



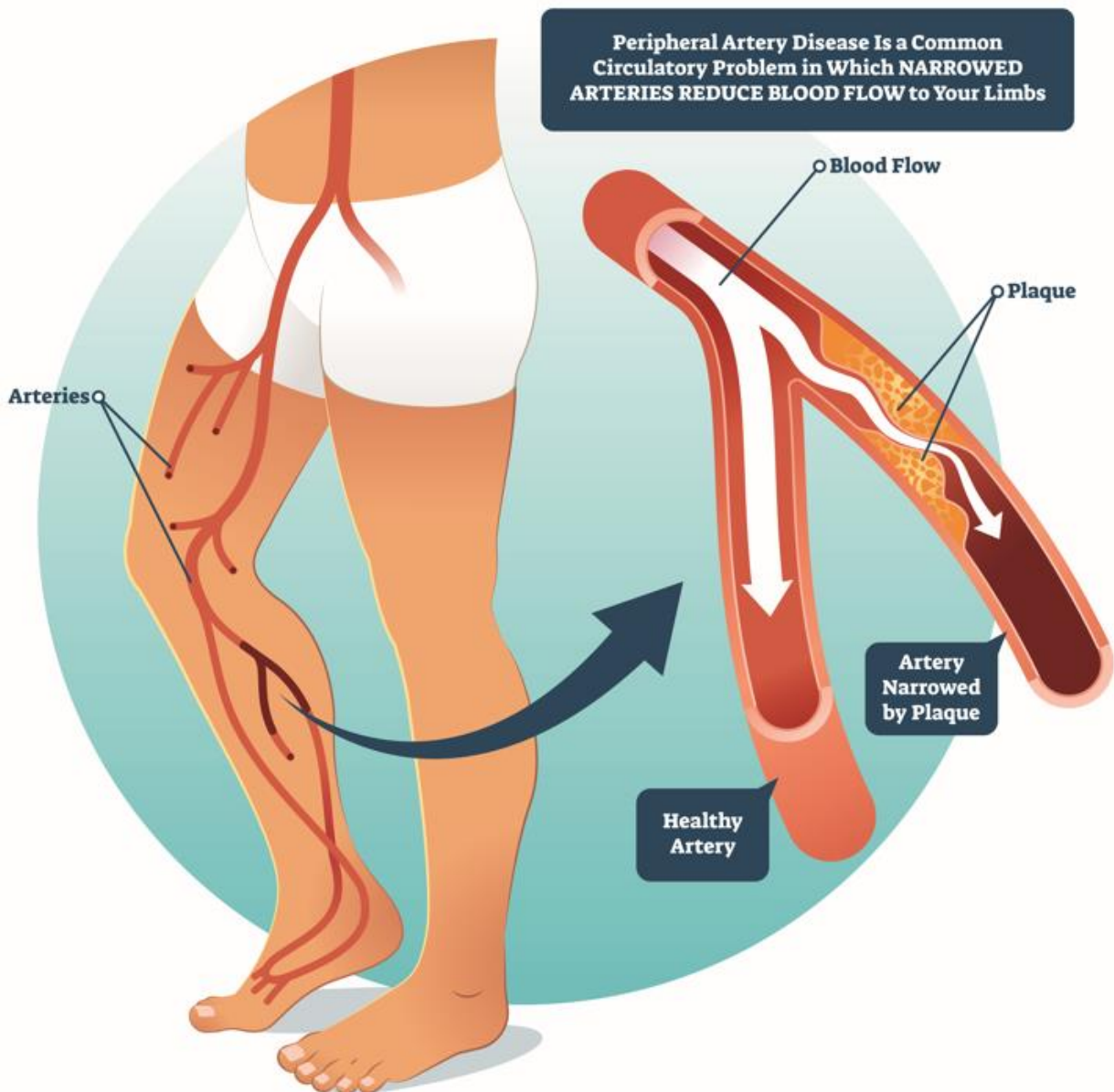
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What is Intermittent claudication?

Intermittent claudication is a **painful ache or cramping sensation** in the leg muscles (calf, thigh and/or buttock) caused by **walking or exercise**. The pain normally occurs at a **similar distance** and then disappears after a few minutes of rest. Intermittent claudication symptoms are a common first sign of **Peripheral Arterial Disease**. The ache/cramp is caused by a **narrowing or blockage of the arteries** supplying the legs which means the leg muscles do not receive enough blood containing oxygen. 5% of people over 60 have the condition.



Why take part in the Home-Based Exercise Programme?

If the main leg arteries become **narrowed** and/or **blocked** this will not improve on its own however, exercise can prevent your condition worsening and make your symptoms better.

Regular exercise can stimulate smaller arteries to become enlarged to deliver blood carrying oxygen to your leg muscles by an alternative route around the narrowing or blockage. These alternative routes are known as **collateral circulation**. The collateral circulation takes time to become established, therefore it is important to engage with **regular exercise**.

Exercising in conjunction with healthy lifestyle changes and medication where appropriate can prevent narrowing's and blockages becoming more severe.

Regular exercise has been shown to:

- ❖ Increase walking distance.
- ❖ Increase walking time.

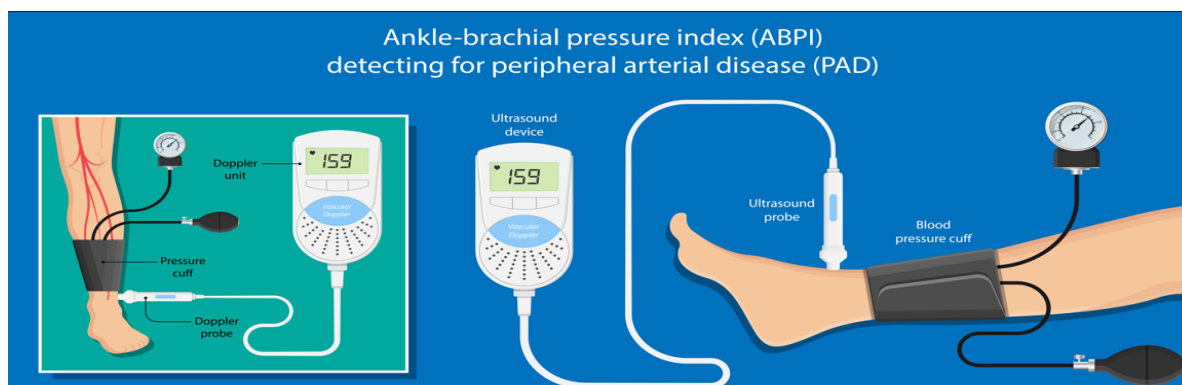
Who is this programme for?

- ❖ Diagnosis of intermittent claudication.
- ❖ Minimum walking distance of 20 meters.

Home-Based Exercise Programme

1. Week 1. Vascular Laboratory primary appointment (up to 60 minutes) which will include:

- General health questionnaire.
- A walking exercise test which will require you to walk at a comfortable, brisk pace. You will be asked to walk until the cramping symptoms in your leg require you to stop.
- A Resting Ankle Brachial Pressure Index test.



2. Weeks 1-12. The programme will run for 12 weeks at home away from the hospital.

1. Complete a 40-minute walk three times a week. You are aiming for a minimum of 2 hours of walking per week.
2. Follow a 'walk-rest-walk' pattern whereby you walk at a pace which you can comfortably maintain until the leg muscle cramps are sufficient to stop you walking. Take a rest until the pain subsides and continue walking. Repeat this process throughout the remainder of the session. You should record:
 - Time taken and distance walked before you require your first rest break due to cramps.
 - Total walking time and distance walked at the end of the session.
3. Note all exercise on your diary sheet which will be provided during your primary appointment.

3. Week 13. Vascular Laboratory secondary (up to 60 minutes) to assess programme outcomes which will include:

- General health questionnaire.
- A walking exercise test which will require you to walk at a comfortable, brisk pace. You will be asked to walk until the cramping symptoms in your leg require you to stop.
- A Resting Ankle Brachial Pressure Index test.

If you develop any of the following symptoms, stop the programme and discuss your concerns with your GP

- ❖ Chest pain of recent onset.
- ❖ Diagnosis of heart condition which is uncontrolled e.g. angina.
- ❖ Diagnosis of high-blood pressure (hypertension) which is uncontrolled.
- ❖ Shortness of breath at rest or minimal activity e.g. walking around the house.
- ❖ Significant pain different to your leg claudication pain e.g. joint pain.

If you are diagnosed with any condition mentioned above during the programme, please inform the Vascular Laboratory.

Things to remember

- You will not cause harm by walking with claudication pain.
- It will take several weeks before your symptoms and walking distance improves.

Stretches for after the walking session

It is important to stretch after exercise. After each session you should complete these stretches on each leg. Each stretch should be held for 10-15 seconds.

Calf Stretch

Stand up straight, step one foot forward and bend this knee. Your other leg should stay straight with your heel and toes flat on the ground. Lean slightly forward to stretch your bent leg. You can lean against a wall for additional support.



Hamstring Stretch

Lie on your back and raise one leg. Hold the back of the raised leg below your knee. Your opposite leg can be flat on the floor or bent with your foot flat on the floor. Pull the raised leg towards you keeping this leg straight.



Quad Stretch

Stand on one leg, bring the raised foot up towards your bottom and hold your foot in place. Make sure your thighs are kept together. You can use a wall or chair for balance.



Further advice and additional stretches can be found at:

NHS Healthy Living: How to stretch after exercising

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/running-and-aerobic-exercises/how-to-stretch-after-exercising/>

What support is available?

Diary log book

You will be provided with a diary sheet for the 12-week programme to complete at home to keep track of each walking session including:

- ❖ Time walked before you need your first rest break due to leg cramps.
- ❖ Distance walked by the time you stop for this first rest break.
- ❖ Total session time, this should be at least 40 minutes.
- ❖ Total distance walked by the end of the session.

Lifestyle Factor Considerations

Intermittent claudication can be largely treated through lifestyle changes and medication. The most important changes you can make are:

- 1) Stop smoking
- 2) Start or increase exercise

Other factors which can help include:

- Eating a balanced diet which is varied and low in salt, added sugars and fat.
- Lose weight if you are overweight or obese.
- Reduction in the amount of alcohol you drink per week.
- If you have high blood pressure ensure this is controlled, normally by hypertension medication.
- If you have high cholesterol ensure this is controlled, normally by a statin medication.
- Controlling high blood pressure and cholesterol alongside your antiplatelet medication reduces the risk of your peripheral arterial disease progressing, a heart attack and a stroke.
- If you are diabetic, make sure this is well controlled and you take good care of your feet e.g. wear well-fitting shoes when exercising.

Where can I find more information on intermittent claudication?

This leaflet has been provided to give you information regarding an exercise treatment option for your condition. Additional information regarding managing your condition can be found at:

❖ **NHS Choices**

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/peripheral-arterial-disease-pad/>

❖ **The Circulation Foundation**

<https://www.circulationfoundation.org.uk/help-advice/peripheral-arterial-disease/intermittent-claudication>

❖ **National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)**

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg147>

❖ **The Vascular Society of Great Britain & Ireland**

https://www.vascularsociety.org.uk/patients/conditions/6/claudication_cramp_when_walking

If you require any additional support to read this leaflet (e.g. a large font or a non-English language version) or, have any questions regarding the content please ask a member of staff for advice or contact the Vascular Laboratory.

Address:

Vascular Laboratory,
Clinical Investigations Unit,
Worcestershire Royal Hospital,
Charles Hastings Way,
Worcester,
WR5 1DD.

If your symptoms or condition worsens, or if you are concerned about anything, please call your GP, 111, or 999.

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.