

Exercising with Peripheral Vascular Disease

Peripheral Vascular Disease (PVD) is a chronic, progressive condition that is associated with a reduction in blood flow to the lower extremities. As a result, there is a deficit in oxygen availability where oxygen demand is greater than oxygen supply. The most common symptom associated with PVD is an aching, cramping, fatigue-like numbness, felt predominantly in the calf muscles. Symptoms may be experienced in regions such as the buttocks, hips, thighs and feet as well.

Risk Factors that contribute to the development of PVD include...

- Smoking
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Physical Inactivity
- High Cholesterol
- High Blood Pressure

**PVD can be treated by...*

- making lifestyle changes
- taking medications or
- via surgery if required

Benefits of Exercise Training

- Improve walking distance
- Increase joint mobility
- Reduce inflammation and pain
- Maintain independence
- Increase blood flow

Aerobic Exercise

Frequency: Initially, a minimum of 3 times per week is sufficient but try to build up to 5 sessions weekly.

Intensity: Exercise within an RPE range of 11-14 to your maximum tolerated level of pain. Ensure you can carry on a conversation during your sessions.

Time: Aim to achieve 20-30 minutes of continuous exercise. Start with short bursts of activity with rest periods in between.

Type: Walking is the best activity to begin with! Other options you may like to consider are swimming and cycling.

Our Recommendations For You

The greatest improvements in physical capacity will occur by training to maximum tolerated pain, followed by rest breaks allowing the pain to resolve. If tolerated, walking should be the primary mode of exercise.

Start with a light 5 – 10 minute warm-up, which will allow for a gradual increase in blood flow and may delay onset of calf pain.

Then, increase your pace to a level you can tolerate for at least 5 minutes. Rest when the pain in the legs becomes intolerable. Your goal is to eventually need fewer breaks, working towards accumulating 20 – 30 minutes of continuous exercise.

It is a good idea to increase the duration of your exercise by 1-2 minutes each week.

As you progress and there is minimal muscle soreness 24 hours post-exercise, you may increase the frequency of exercise sessions.