Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is a common circulation problem; arteries that carry blood to the legs or arms become narrowed or clogged.

**Main cause of PAD**
- Hardening of arteries
- Plaque builds up in arteries; narrows, blocks blood flow (also called atherosclerosis)

**Risk factors**
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Obesity (a body mass index over 30)
- High blood pressure (140/90 millimeters of mercury or higher)
- High cholesterol (total blood cholesterol over 240 milligrams per deciliter, or 6.2 millimoles per liter)
- Increasing age, especially after reaching 50 years of age
- A family history of peripheral artery disease, heart disease or stroke
- Excess levels of homocysteine

**Symptoms**
- Painful cramping in your hip, thigh or calf muscles after activity, such as walking or climbing stairs (intermittent claudication)
- Leg numbness or weakness
- Coldness in your lower leg or foot, especially when compared with the other leg
- Sores on your toes, feet or legs that won’t heal
- A change in the color of your legs
- Hair loss or slower hair growth on your feet and legs
- Slower growth of your toenails
- Shiny skin on your legs
- No pulse or a weak pulse in your legs or feet
- Erectile dysfunction in men

**People with PAD**
- Have 6-7 times higher risk of heart attack, stroke
- An estimated 27 million people in Europe, North America have PAD; 60% have no symptoms

**Simple test**
Ankle-brachial index compares blood pressure in ankle and arm to see how well blood is flowing

Source: American Heart Association, Medscape, Society of Interventional Radiology, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research