



Exercise for Vascular Disease (Intermittent Claudication)

Physiotherapy Department



WHAT IS INTERMITTENT CLAUDICATION?

Intermittent claudication is the name for the symptoms caused by blockages or narrowing of the arteries in your legs (sometimes called 'atherosclerosis' or 'hardening of the arteries'). The symptoms commonly appear as pain in the calf, thigh or buttock, but can also present as cramps, numbness or discomfort.

The blockages or narrowing prevent enough blood from reaching your leg muscles as you exercise or walk. Without enough blood flow, the muscles are starved of oxygen causing your symptoms. When you rest, your muscles are not working.

WHY SHOULD I EXERCISE?

Exercise:

- Will stimulate your circulation and improve the blood flow to your legs.
- May help to develop small side channels to bypass the blocked or narrowed arteries.
- Can make the muscles more efficient.
- Might reduce the need for an operation.
- Helps prevent joints becoming stiff and painful and improves mobility.
- Improves your general fitness.
- Makes you feel good.

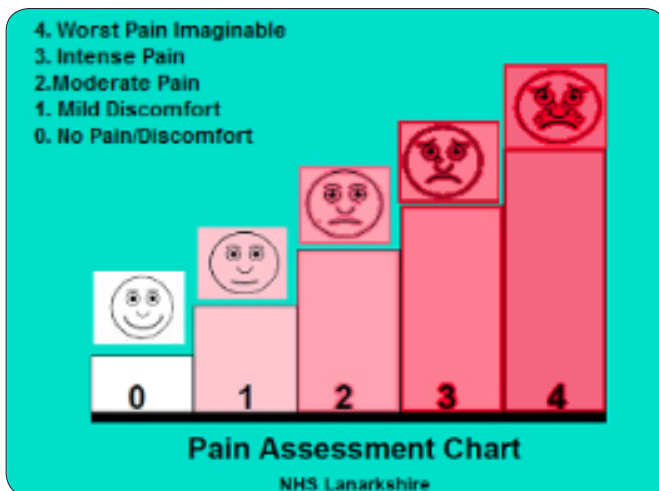
Walking

Walking is the best exercise that you can do. You should try to go for a walk 5-7 days per week. Start with a distance you are comfortable with and aim to increase the distance regularly. You may find timing yourself or using landmarks as a record will let you see any improvement. Varying the route will help keep you motivated.

It may take some months for you to notice a significant improvement, but the more you try to exercise and walk the better the benefit to your health. You should aim to be able to walk for 30 minutes.

To really feel the benefits of walking you need to walk through the pain in your muscles to the point where the pain is quite intense.

Look at the table below - you should aim to walk to level 3.



When you reach **LEVEL 3 STOP AND REST**. Allow the pain to completely settle before starting again. Try to gradually increase the distance between rests.

Don't overdo it!

When you walk it is normal to feel:

- Tired and sore initially
(*especially if you are usually not very active*).
- Warm and a little sweaty.
- Slightly short of breath but able to carry out normal conversation.
- Your heart beating a little faster than usual but NOT racing.

If you feel any of the following symptoms - **slow down or stop!**

- Very short of breath
- A pounding or racing heart
- Dizziness
- Extreme fatigue
- Chest pain
- Blurred vision

Tips

- Wear comfortable clothing.
- Allow one hour after eating a heavy meal if you are going to walk more than 15 minutes.
- Drink some water before and after your walk.
- Always warm up by walking at a slower pace for the first five minutes. This will improve your walking ability and reduce the risk of injuring your muscles.
- Try to pick a route with plenty of resting places in case you need to stop these could be bus stops, walls or park benches.
- When you walk make a note of how long you walked for and/or how far you have walked.

After Walking

- Cool down - you can do this by gently walking around for a few minutes or by sitting in a chair gently tapping your toes and circling your ankles.

When shouldn't I walk?

If you experience any of the following take a rest day and don't return to your walking programme until you feel better:

- A bad cold, flu, high temperature or generally unwell.
- Any injury to muscles or joints.
- A new episode of arthritic pain in ankles, knees and hips.
- New or increased episodes of chest pain, dizziness or breathlessness.

Exercises

These exercises can be carried out in conjunction with your walking. If any of these exercises cause increased pain or discomfort, check with your doctor before continuing. If you get new symptoms such as chest pain, increased shortness of breath or severe pain at rest - **stop** exercising and consult your doctor.



Walking.



Pull your toes up then push your toes away.



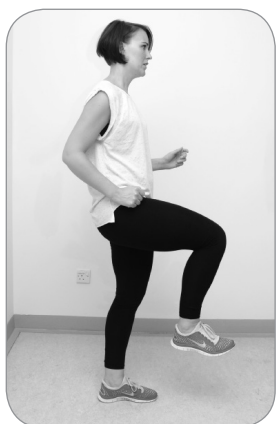
Straighten your knee and hold for 5 seconds. Pull your toes up as you do this.



Lift your leg up from the hip keeping your knee bent hold for 5 seconds and return to starting position.



Holding onto a chair or worktop go up and down on your toes.



March on the spot for 60 seconds.



Squat down then
straighten back up.



Walk on your toes for 10 seconds.
(Hold onto a worktop if you need to)



Walk on your heels for 10 seconds.
(Hold onto a worktop if you need to)



Use stairs whenever possible.
Try to do a flight without stopping.



Push your heel down onto
the floor with your knee
straight and hold for
30 seconds

Try to carry out your exercises at least 3 times per day.

Contact Details:

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Exercise Diary

Date				
Walking				
Ankles				
Knee Straightening				
Sitting Marching				
Go up and down on toes				
Standing Marching				
Squats				
Walking on toes				
Walking on heels				
Stairs				
Calf Stretches				

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