

Watch Your Weight

Excess weight can have a potentially serious effect on our health and can increase our risk of arterial disease, make our symptoms worse and make it difficult to keep mobile. If you are concerned about your weight or would simply like to lose weight and get fitter and healthier, some small life-style changes can make a big difference.

Help and Advice from One You Plymouth

One You Plymouth is a Wellbeing Service that anyone can use to find out about lifestyle issues and how to make changes that can help prevent ill-health. This is a free local service supported by the NHS.

You can contact them yourself and do not need to be referred to access information and advice. If you would like advice about any of the following please contact the One You Plymouth team.:

- Stopping Smoking
- Getting active and feeling fitter
- Eating smart, feeling good and a keeping to a healthier weight

One You Plymouth:

Website: www.oneyouplymouth.co.uk

Tel: 01752 437177

Email: oneyou.plymouth@nhs.net

Alternatively you can speak to your GP Practice about ways to improve your health and to manage your peripheral arterial disease.

If you have any questions regarding the information in this leaflet, please contact Podiatry Services.

Further information about the service and how to manage a range of foot health problems yourself, can also be found on our website:

www.livewellsouthwest.co.uk/project/podiatry

Contact Details

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Mount Gould Hospital
200 Mount Gould Road
Plymouth, PL4 7QD

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Podiatry Services Patient Information Leaflet



Peripheral Arterial Disease

(March 2023)

Advice for patients to improve the blood flow in their legs using a simple exercise and lifestyle changes

We support people to lead independent, healthy lives

Your Podiatrist has identified that you have peripheral arterial disease (poor blood flow to your legs and feet) and this leaflet gives you some advice about ways which may help improve this for you.

When blood flow to the legs and feet is affected you may experience cramp-like pain in your legs or feet when you have been walking a certain distance or up an incline when your muscles are working hard. These cramping pains are called intermittent claudication. You may also get “night cramps”, which are also referred to as rest pain. Some patients however, do not experience these symptoms. Either way, it is important to do what you can to help improve your own well-being and reduce the effects on your quality of life.

Buerger-Allen Exercises

This simple 3-stage exercise regime is designed to help improve the arterial blood supply, or circulation as it is commonly called, to your legs and feet by developing the collateral circulatory system. These exercises are particularly useful if you are bed or wheelchair bound.

The collateral circulation is an alternative route that may be used for blood to travel to the legs and feet where the blood vessels that would normally be used have become narrowed or even blocked.

Why do these exercises help my circulation?

Buerger-Allen exercises promote the process by which small arteries (blood vessels) in your leg, which are not normally part of the main circulatory system, are developed and used to as an alternative route to transport blood, avoiding narrowed or blocked blood vessels, creating the collateral circulation. This can help improve blood flow in the lower limb, and get the oxygen and nutrients that are needed to help keep tissues such as skin and muscles healthy.

How do I do the exercises?

Start these exercises gently and only do what you can do comfortably – do not strain yourself. You can do this for each leg separately or both at the same time.

1
Lie flat on a bed with your legs raised on pillows to a 45° - 60° angle. If you have back or hip problems, angle your leg(s) as high as you comfortably can



Do this for 2 minutes.

2
Sit upright as quickly as you can and drop your leg(s) over the side of the bed.



Move your foot up and down flexing at your ankle continuously.

Do this for 2 minutes.

3
Lie flat with your legs out straight and rest. Do this for 2 minutes.



4
Repeat the exercise another 2-3 times and do this each day and continue doing these exercises until you are able to begin walking exercises.

What Else Can I do?

Smoking

If you smoke and have not already thought about it, seriously consider stopping. Smoking is one of the main causes of peripheral vascular disease. The good news is that it is never too late to stop and doing so will also improve your general health and well-being.

Get Active!

Exercise has many health benefits and even if you are not very mobile there are easy things you can do to get fitter. Exercise can reduce the effects of arterial disease and you do not need to join a gym to get active! Simply taking a brisk walk every day can improve the blood supply to your legs and feet.

Keep your Cholesterol Levels Down

Having high cholesterol levels can double your risk of developing arterial disease. If you are concerned you should speak to your GP.