

"My Arterial Leg Ulcer"



Information on how to care for you or your loved one's Arterial Leg Ulcer

What is an Arterial Leg Ulcer?

An arterial leg ulcer is a sore on the leg, ankle, or foot of someone with poor blood flow to their legs. This poor blood flow is from hardening or blockage of the arteries in the legs. Arteries are blood vessels that carry oxygen rich blood throughout the body.

What are the signs of Poor Blood Flow?

- Cool legs/feet
- Shiny, tight skin on leg
- Loss of hair on the feet and lower legs
- Pale, blue, purple, or red feet
- Feet that go pale when they are above level of the heart, and go red/purple when they are down
- Pain (cramping) in calves when walking – goes away with rest
- Pain when feet are up – feels better when feet down
- Tingling/numbness and weakness in legs/feet
- Black toes or black "scabs" on toes, feet, ankles, or legs

What do Arterial Ulcers look like?

Smooth, round edges, drain small amounts of fluid. Usually pale pink or white base with yellow or black tissue. Arterial wounds can also be black toes or black scabs on toes.

Pain Control

Arterial leg ulcers can be painful. Pain can affect appetite, emotions, quality of life, and ability to sleep, work, and move. This pain is described as shooting, stabbing, aching, burning, searing, electric and is usually worse at the end of the day, with leg elevation, and when walking or climbing stairs. Tell your health care provider about your pain, take medications as prescribed, and explore non-medication pain control strategies.

What is the treatment for an Arterial Leg Ulcer?

If you have severe blood flow problems the ulcer will not heal unless the blood flow is fixed. In this case the goal is to prevent infection. This is done by drying the ulcer out. Bandages must be kept clean and dry. If the dressing falls off, leaks, or gets dirty follow the instructions given to you by your health care provider.

What can YOU do to HELP?

- Follow the instructions of your health care provider
- Do not take long, hot baths
- Seek medical attention right away if there is redness, heat, swelling, red streaks up the leg, fever
- Wash your legs daily with warm water and mild, non-scented soap and pat dry
- Moisturize legs daily with mild, non-scented pH balanced soap
- Do not scratch your legs
- Exercise daily as tolerated – do not shuffle feet
- Do not stand or sit for long periods
- Keep your legs and feet warm and dry
- Stop or cut back on smoking
- Eat a well-balanced diet and drink lots of non-caffeinated fluids
- Take your medications as prescribed
- Keep your blood sugars in good control if you have diabetes
- Get enough sleep
- Keep pain under control

What is an ABPI Test?

Helps to find out how well blood is flowing in your legs and helps guide treatment. Done with a blood pressure cuff and a small ultrasound machine. You must lie flat for 15 minutes before the test, stay lying during the test and not smoke or drink/eat caffeine for 30 minutes before the test.