

# Vascular Walking Program

## General Information

With peripheral arterial disease (PAD), your leg pain can limit your ability to walk and decrease your quality of life. It may be difficult to go grocery shopping or walk from a parking lot.

You may be thinking, “If I can’t walk from my car to the shopping mall without leg pain, how could I be in a walking program?”

- **Research indicates that most people, after just 6 weeks of being in a walking program, have a 100 to 300 percent improvement in the distance they can walk before having leg pain. (This leg pain is known as intermittent claudication.)**
- **According to the American Heart Association, exercise therapy is the best treatment for claudication.**

## Starting a Walking Program

Here are the steps to begin your vascular walking program:

- Choose possible locations for walking:
  - medical fitness center affiliated with your local hospital
  - outside sidewalks and paths (avoiding hills and slopes)
  - a track at a nearby school
  - a treadmill
  - shopping mall.
- Begin with a slow warm-up walk for 5 minutes.

- Continue to walk at an increased pace. If pain begins, try to walk at least 30 to 40 yards more. Stop when the pain becomes severe. Record the number of continuous minutes you were able to walk.
- Stop, remain standing and rest, until the pain lessens. This is a key part to your circulation and symptoms.
- **Resume** walking until you must stop and rest. Continue this pattern until you have added up to 30 to 35 minutes of walking time. This does not include resting time.
- Try to begin this walking program with a walking speed of 2 miles per hour (mph). Two mph is a speed where you can walk a quarter mile (4 blocks) in 7.5 minutes. If you cannot walk that fast, do not worry. Next time, try a little faster until you are able to go 2 mph. If you are able to walk 2 mph or faster right away, that’s great!
- Progression:
  - **Walk every day** if you can, or a **minimum of 4 days per week.**
  - **Week 2:** add 5 to 10 minutes over the course of that week; total **40 minutes.**
  - **Week 3:** add 5 to 10 minutes; total **50 minutes**
  - **Week 4:** add 5 to 10 minutes; total **60 minutes**
  - Continue with **60 minutes for 5 to 7 days** each week
- Once you have reached the 60 minutes of walking time, increase your walking pace (how fast you go).