

Managing Your Vascular Disease

Vascular Disease

Vascular disease is a term for a wide range of diseases that affect the vascular (blood vessel) systems of your body. This means your arteries or veins may not be working as well as they once did.

Vascular disease can affect important organs found in your body, such as your:

- **heart.** It can cause chest pain (angina), a heart attack or heart failure.
- **brain.** It can cause strokes, transient ischemic attacks (TIAs), also called mini-strokes, or dementia (changes in personality, behavior and memory).
- **kidneys.** It can cause kidney (renal) failure. Kidney failure happens when your kidneys can no longer get rid of waste products and fluid through the urine.

Vascular disease can also affect your limbs (arms or legs). It can cause poor circulation and skin ulcers (sores).

Managing Vascular Disease

There are important ways you can work with your health care provider to manage your vascular disease and continue to live a healthy life.

Manage your LDL ‘bad’ cholesterol

When too much LDL (low density lipoprotein) cholesterol builds in your artery walls, your circulation is reduced. This puts you at risk for a heart attack, stroke, kidney failure or other serious problems.

Guidelines for LDL are based on your overall risk for heart disease. Talk with your health care provider about your LDL goal.

Manage your blood pressure

Blood pressure is the amount of pressure within the walls of the arteries. When this pressure is too high your heart has to work harder. High blood pressure usually has no signs or symptoms until you have a heart attack, stroke or other problem.

Allina Health recommends a blood pressure goal of less than 139/89 if you have diabetes. Your risk of problems from vascular disease goes down the more you can safely lower your blood pressure. Talk to your health care provider about the blood pressure goal that is safe for you.

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Take your medicine(s)

Your health care provider may prescribe medicines to help control your blood pressure, lower your LDL and prevent the risk of blood clots.

Medicines are a very important part of managing your vascular disease and avoiding problems. You may need up to three medicines to help keep your blood pressure at a safe level.

It is important to continue taking your medicine as directed. If you miss a dose of medicine, take it as soon as you can, and then get back to your regular dose schedule. If you do not realize you've missed a dose until it is time for the next dose, do not take a double dose.

Call your health care provider if you are having any problems taking your medicine. You and your health care provider can work together on a plan that will help you be successful.

Stop using tobacco

Tobacco use is the most preventable cause of death in the U.S. People who smoke cigarettes are 2 to 4 times more likely to develop heart disease than those who do not smoke, and 10 times as likely to develop peripheral artery disease (PAD).

To reduce problems with vascular disease, your health care provider recommends that you stop using tobacco.

There are many treatment options to help you quit tobacco use. Talk with your health care provider about the best one for you.

You can also check with your insurance provider about quitting programs that may be available to you.

Make Healthy Lifestyle Changes

Healthy lifestyle changes can help you manage vascular disease.

- Lose weight if needed.
- Eat healthful foods low in fat and salt and high in fiber.
- Drink no more than two alcoholic drinks each day.
- Be more active. A walk or bicycle ride every day can help lower your weight and blood pressure.
- Limit decongestants. These can raise your blood pressure.
- Check your blood pressure at home regularly. Keep a log and share it with your health care provider.

When to Call Your Health Care Provider

Call your health care provider if you have questions about your goals for managing vascular disease.