

Peripheral Artery Disease: Six Signs, One Test

The six leg signs NHLBI names, the ankle test that settles it, and the risk factors Mayo Clinic lists.

✓ **Verified against published guidance** from NHLBI, Mayo Clinic & Cleveland Clinic · sources below

NHLBI says that without treatment peripheral artery disease may cause sores, infections and even the loss of a limb, and that leg and foot pain at rest is called critical limb ischemia and signals severe disease. Sores or wounds on the toes, feet or legs that heal slowly or not at all need medical attention rather than time.



Do This

Time The Walking Pain

- Note how far before it starts
- Calf, buttock, thigh or foot
- Note how long until it settles

COACH'S TIP That pattern is the main sign.

Ask For The Ankle Test

- Ankle brachial index by name
- Usually the first test done
- Arm pressure versus ankle

COACH'S TIP Cleveland Clinic names it first.

Ask For A Bare Foot Exam

- Provider examines both feet
- Compares one side to the other
- Feels pulses along the leg

COACH'S TIP It costs nothing to ask.

Check The Quiet Signs

- Hair and toenails stop growing
- Pale, blue or shiny skin
- One foot colder than the other

COACH'S TIP Five of six are not pain.

Treat The Whole System

- Blood pressure and cholesterol
- Same disease, other arteries
- Diabetes and smoking

COACH'S TIP Stroke and heart attack are listed.

Keep Walking, With Guidance

- Exercise is part of treatment
- Ask what type and how much
- Structured exercise therapy

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic names exercise.



Do Not

Do Not Blame Age Alone

- Age is a risk factor
- Cramping on stairs is a symptom
- It is not an explanation

COACH'S TIP Mayo Clinic lists it as a sign.

Do Not Read Silence As Safety

- About 1 in 5 report no symptoms
- Same high cardiovascular risk
- More than half are nontypical

COACH'S TIP NHLBI is blunt on this.

Do Not Wait Out A Foot Sore

- Wounds may not heal at all
- Limb loss is the endpoint
- They may become infected

COACH'S TIP This one is urgent.

Do Not Rest The Leg Instead

- Exercise is part of the treatment
- Check the plan with your team
- Structured therapy is named

COACH'S TIP Rest alone is not the fix.

Do Not Skip The Screen

- Risk factors alone justify it
- Age over 65, or 50 with risks
- Diabetes, smoking, cholesterol

COACH'S TIP Screening is for the symptom free.

Do Not Ignore Rest Pain

- Pain at rest or lying down
- That is severe disease
- Pain that wakes you at night

COACH'S TIP Critical limb ischemia.

THE NUMBERS BEHIND THIS SHEET

Three figures worth knowing

1 in 5 Report no symptoms at all, NHLBI

1 in 4 Have the common symptoms, NHLBI

65 Age risk rises sharply, Mayo Clinic