

3.21 Cardiovascular health - Peripheral Vascular disease

Ethel is a 72 year old lady with peripheral artery disease that was diagnosed following a ABPI test. Ethel has diabetes and high blood pressure.

Ethel: I just want to make sure that I can get home from the shops. Every time I walk 100 yards the pain comes on.

Provide: The pain you're getting in your calves, when you walk, is caused by narrowing in your arteries. This is caused by lots of things including smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol and family history.

Elicit: OK?

Ethel: I read a leaflet in the clinic about people losing their legs. Is that going to happen to me?

Provide: That would be really unusual. But since you also have diabetes, please check your feet every day. Keep an eye on your feet. Treat your skin with an ointment daily and make sure that we catch any infections early. Diabetes and poor circulation can affect your ability to heal.

We now know that your blood vessels are narrowed and that you are prone to heart and strokes. It's even more important that we protect you from heart attacks and strokes.

Elicit: Alright?

Ethel: I just don't want to lose a leg. Who would do Stan's shopping then?

Provide: You mentioned that you want to be able to get back from the shops. Please keep active. The more you walk the more you'll be able to walk. Provided that the pain settles when you rest: it is good for you to be active. Walk until you get pain, then stop and then keep starting and stopping. Keep this up for half an hour and try to do it on most days. You'll gradually be able to do more each day.

Elicit: OK?

Provide: There are other things that you can do yourself to help the symptoms. Staying off the fags and doing regular exercise are the main things. We will usually put you on clopidogrel, a cholesterol treatment and blood pressure tablets. All of these treatments protect you from heart attacks and strokes. A healthy diet, with seeds, and lo-salt will also help.

Sometimes it's worth thinking about surgery.