

Peripheral Vascular Disease

One often hears retirees complain of leg cramps or pains when walking or exercising. Sometimes severe foot pain is experienced. They often shrug these symptoms off as a part of advancing age. But it's a sign of a severe blood vessel disorder called peripheral vascular disease. Nearly five percent of people in their 50s and 10 to 20 percent of people over 70 have symptoms of PVD.

The arteries in the legs and arms can more easily become narrowed or clogged with advancing age. About 10 million Americans suffer with this problem which produces symptoms of leg or hip pain or numbness, particularly when walking or exercising, but only about half of the people with this condition seek medical help. The pain is caused when an insufficient amount of blood flows to the leg muscles during exercise. There is no pain at rest. This is obviously a breakdown of the collagen structure in the blood vessels themselves.

Collagen is produced by vitamin C (along with the amino acids proline and lysine). Blood serum vitamin C levels are unusually low among patients with peripheral artery disease, even when compared with smokers whose tobacco consumption depletes the body of vitamin C. A shortage of vitamin C was found among artery diseased patients. High levels of

C-Reactive Protein seem to be predictive for this condition. [Circulation 103:1863-8, 2001]

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