

Ankle-Brachial Index (ABI)

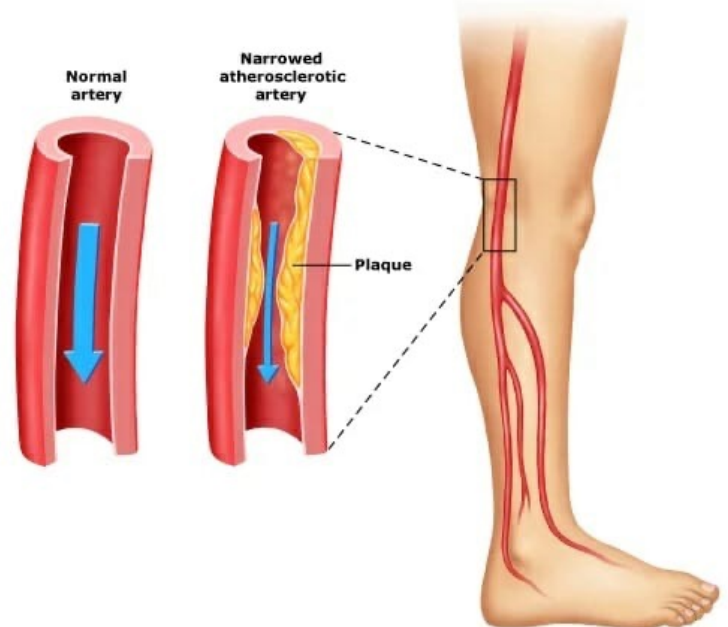
What is an ABI test?

Health care professionals use the ankle-brachial index (ABI) test to check for poor blood flow in the legs. Poor blood flow in the limbs is referred to as peripheral artery disease (PAD). PAD can cause leg pain, aching, fatigue and may increase the risk of heart attack and stroke. As it becomes more severe, other symptoms can occur as described below. The ABI is a non-invasive screening test, which compares the blood pressure measured at your ankle with the blood pressure measured at your arm. A low ankle-brachial index number can indicate narrowing or blockage of the arteries in your legs.

What is PAD?

[PAD](#) is a common disorder. It most often affects men over age 50, but women can have it as well. People are at higher risk if they have a history of:

- Abnormal cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Heart disease (coronary artery disease)
- High blood pressure
- Kidney disease involving hemodialysis
- Smoking
- Stroke



Symptoms

The main symptoms of PAD are pain, achiness, fatigue, burning, or discomfort in the muscles of your feet, calves, or thighs. These symptoms most often appear during walking or exercise, then go away after several minutes of rest.

At first, these symptoms may appear only when you walk uphill, walk faster, or walk for longer distances.

Slowly, these symptoms occur more quickly and with less exercise. Your legs or feet may feel numb when you are at rest. The legs also may feel cool to the touch, and the skin may look pale.

When PAD becomes severe, you may have:

- Pain and cramps at night
- Pain or tingling in the feet or toes, which can be so severe that even the weight of clothes or bed sheets is painful
- Pain that is worse when you elevate your legs, and improves when you dangle your legs over the side of the bed
- Skin that looks dark and blue
- Sores that do not heal
- Impotence