PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL OCCLUSIVE DISEASE

ALL TISSUES AND ORGANS IN THE BODY NEED OXYGEN AND NUTRIENTS TO SURVIVE AND FUNCTION NORMALLY. THESE NECESSARY ELEMENTS ARE SUPPLIED TO THE ORGANS THROUGH A SYSTEM OF BRANCHING PIPES CALLED ARTERIES WHICH START AT THE HEART.

WHAT IS IT?

THE MOST COMMON DISEASE THAT AFFECTS THE ARTERIAL SYSTEM IS KNOWN AS PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE (PAD).

It affects more than 10 million people in the US. The hallmark of PAD is plaque formation in the arteries due to accumulation of cholesterol. This can progress slowly from a thin plaque to a partial or total blockage leading to inadequate blood supply to parts of the body.

HOW IS IT CAUSED?

PAD IS CAUSED BY MANY FACTORS INCLUDING; GENETICS, SMOKING, DIABETES, HIGH CHOLESTEROL, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE, KIDNEY FAILURE, SEDENTARY LIFE STYLE, POOR DIETARY CHOICES AND OBESITY.

Initially, there may be no symptoms but as the blockages worsen, the symptoms may include calf pain while walking (intermittent claudication). If the blockages progress further, it may result in foot pain around the clock (rest pain). In more advanced stages, painful ulcers or gangrene may occur resulting in the need for an amputation.

HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

FORTUNATELY, THE DISEASE PROCESS CAN BE SLOWED.

Diagnostic and therapeutic interventions by your physician can avoid limb threatening complications. The diagnosis starts with a thorough physical examination by your physician, followed by a non-invasive screening test, called an ankle brachial index (ABI). If there is evidence of significant PAD, it may lead to further testing which provides valuable information regarding the extent and location of the arterial blockages. These tests include an ultrasound of the leg, CT scan or angiogram (x-ray imaging study of the blood vessels).

HOW IS IT MANAGED?

THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION STARTS WITH MANAGING RISK FACTORS SUCH AS, SMOKING CESSATION, BLOOD PRESSURE AND CHOLESTEROL TREATMENT ALONG WITH MANAGEMENT OF DIABETES AND OBESITY.

When these treatments are insufficient to abate the symptoms or prevent limb loss additional interventions are considered. Many of these interventions are minimally invasive and include angioplasty, stenting and plaque removal via small catheter. In the event that the PAD is more advanced, open surgery on the artery to remove the plaque or creation of a bypass are often used. Your vascular surgeon can help determine which treatment is best for you.

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