

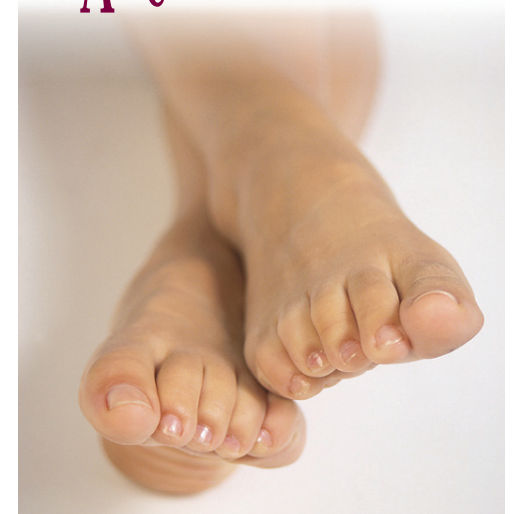
## When do I need to have someone look at my wounds?

- ▶ If you are suffering from the symptoms of arteriosclerosis you may benefit from the advice of a professional trained in the care of this specific disease.
- ▶ If you have a wound that you do not know how you got.
- ▶ If your toes appear purple or black.
- ▶ If your wound does not show significant signs of healing after 5-7 days.
- ▶ If a wound keeps coming back in the same location.



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## A Patient Guide to Arteriosclerosis



Specializing in  
Outpatient  
Wound Care &  
Hyperbarics

# What is Arteriosclerosis?

The arteries are responsible for carrying blood and oxygen to the tissues throughout the body. In arterial disease (atherosclerosis), the arteries become narrowed or blocked. When this happens, the body is unable to carry enough blood to the most distal portion of the extremities (fingers and toes). In more severe cases, the lower legs in their entirety can be affected.



Sometimes the body will form smaller arteries so the blood can go around the blockage called collateral circulation. Unfortunately, these vessels may also become blocked or narrowed. With insufficient flow of blood and oxygen, the tissue begins to breakdown causing an ulcer.

The arterial ulcer will have well defined edges and is usually a circular shape. Your feet may feel cool to the touch, the skin on your legs may appear shiny and there is typically no hair growth. Pulses are often weak or absent and the toenails are thickened.

# What to look for & What to do

## Signs and Symptoms

- Pain when walking
- Pain when at rest (during sleep)
- Numbness or tingling
- Skin appearing shiny and cool to touch
- Limited or no hair growth
- Pale color to leg or feet when elevate
- Red or bluish color when feet are dangling
- Wounds that will not heal
- Toes that turn black

## Steps you can take

- Stop or decrease smoking. Nicotine in any form causes the arteries to constrict, decreasing blood flow.
- Atherosclerosis may be decreased with proper nutrition. Reducing cholesterol and saturated fats will help to lower your risks.
- High blood pressure creates additional work for the heart and in turn increases the stresses placed on the arteries.
- Diabetics are more prone to atherosclerosis. It is recommended that you follow your physicians instructions for glycemic control, diet and exercise.
- A regular daily exercise program often assists in the control of atherosclerosis.

# Daily Foot Care

## An ounce of prevention

When blood flow to the lower extremities is decreased, a minor injury can easily develop into a serious problem. Small injuries to feet and toes may result in serious infections, and/or tissue death (gangrene). Here are some tips to follow:

- Avoid situations that may lead to injury.
- ALWAYS wear shoes, don't go barefoot .
- Avoid extreme heat, cold and strong chemicals.
- Wash and dry your feet daily, do not soak.
- Wear new shoes only for short periods of time.
- Inspect shoes before putting them on to ensure there are no foreign objects in shoes.
- Inspect your feet daily, use a mirror if necessary. This is especially important if you have diabetes or decreased sensation to your feet.
- Cut toenails straight across and no shorter than the length of the toe. You may round the corners with an emery board.
- DO NOT trim calluses, corns or bunions, see a physician.