

Fact Sheet

Leg Cramps/Intermittent Claudication

What is a Leg Cramp?

Some people mistakenly think leg pain is a natural part of getting older, however leg pain that develops during walking and then goes away only with rest can be caused by intermittent claudication (IC), a potentially disabling, yet treatable medical condition.

IC affects people mostly over the age of 55. It is estimated 75 percent of all IC sufferers fail to seek medical help, often because they don't realise IC is a treatable condition. IC is a symptom of peripheral arterial disease (PAD). PAD, also known as "hardening of the arteries", or atherosclerosis of the legs. PAD occurs when arteries in the legs become clogged with fatty deposits.

It is not uncommon for people with PAD to also have atherosclerosis in other parts of their body, especially in their heart and brain. This can lead to serious health problems such as heart attacks or strokes if left untreated. Leg cramps can be felt in the calf, thigh or buttock.

Symptoms

- Aches
- Cramps
- Heaviness
- Numbness

Causes

Risk factors and other conditions that may complicate IC include:

- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Obesity
- Diabetes

Treatment

At Highett Podiatry, we will undertake a careful examination and diagnosis of the condition. Footcare is of critical importance to patients with IC, because seemingly minor injuries to the feet may result in infection, non-healing wounds, and other complications.

Patients, especially those with diabetes, will receive explicit instructions regarding foot and nail care. Smokers need to stop immediately. Exercise programs, particularly walking, can help the condition and effective drug therapy may be prescribed.



ALWAYS CONSULT A TRAINED PROFESSIONAL

The information in this resource is general in nature and is only intended to provide a summary of the subject matter covered. It is not a substitute for medical advice and you should always consult a trained professional practising in the area of medicine in relation to any injury or condition. You use or rely on information in this resource at your own risk and no party involved in the production of this resource accepts any responsibility for the information contained within it or your use of that information.