EXERCISE PROGRAM FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH PERIPHERAL ARTERIAL DISEASE (PAD)

General Information:
Research in vascular exercise has demonstrated remarkable improvement in symptoms of leg pain (claudication) without expensive or invasive interventions. Regular walking programs are extremely helpful for patients with PAD and intermittent claudication.

These steps are designed to help you get started with a safe and effective program to help you walk farther with less pain:

- Walk at least three times a week (preferably every day).
- Your goal is to build up to 30-45 minutes of total walking time (not counting rest breaks). It may take you several weeks to build up your exercise time starting at 5-10 minutes or whatever you can tolerate.
- Walk as far as possible using near-maximal pain (8-9 on the scale below) as a signal to stop, and resume walking when the pain goes away.
- On a treadmill, set the speed and grade at a level that brings on the claudication pain within 3 to 5 minutes. Walk at this rate until you experience claudication of moderate severity, rest until the pain improves, and then resume walking.
- Over time, you will be able to walk longer at the designated speed and grade; workload should then be increased until you develop the pain within 3 to 5 minutes once again.
- This regimen will induce a significant benefit. Studies have demonstrated that participants may be able to walk up to three or four times farther and have less leg pain, within twelve weeks, by following this protocol.

Pain Scale

0_____1_____2_____3_____4_____5_____6_____7_____8_____9_____10
No Pain Moderate Pain Maximal Pain

Individualize exercise guidelines:
Please begin your walking program with _____ minutes of walking _____ times per week. Remember to rest when your leg pain is a _____ on the above pain scale. Resume walking when your leg pain is a _____ on the pain scale.

Other exercise recommendations: _____

*Individuals with PAD are at high risk for having coronary artery (heart) disease. Please get clearance from your health care provider before starting an exercise program.

Braun, CM, et al. "Components of an optimal exercise program for the treatment of patients with claudication," Journal of Vascular Nursing, June 1999.