A structured walking program often works better than medicine or surgery to help people with PAD walk longer and farther without pain. Regular walking helps you

- stay active
- reduce stress
- control diabetes
- control high blood pressure
- control high cholesterol
- lose weight
- tone your muscles
- lower your risk of heart attack and stroke

Ask your doctor about a walking or treadmill program designed for you. He or she may help you design a program that is right for you or direct you to a local hospital or a cardiac rehabilitation center for guidance.

**Slow and Steady Wins the Race**

Over time, you will be able to walk longer with less pain but it may take months, so be patient with yourself!

- Aim at first to build up to 30 to 35 minutes of total walking time (not including resting time).
- Once you’re achieved 35 minutes, reset your goal to achieve 50 minutes of walking.
- Try to add five minutes each week until you can walk 50 minutes during each of three to five sessions a week.
• Once you achieve the 50-minute goal, challenge yourself to work harder, perhaps walking up a hill or the stairs, or adjusting the treadmill’s incline. When your schedule doesn’t allow walking the full 50 minutes, try to work in several shorter sessions during the day.

• Walk at least three to five times a week.

Recommended Walking Routine

• Begin each walk by walking slowly for several minutes
• Take a few minutes to gently stretch the thigh and calf muscles in your legs
• Walking may hurt at first – and that’s good. In fact, the goal is to walk at a pace that causes mild or moderate pain or tightness in your legs within three to five minutes. On a scale of 1 (least) to 5 (highest) level of pain, mild or moderate pain would be 3 or 4. When you reach this level of pain, stop to rest.

Walk at a pace that causes mild or moderate leg pain, then rest. Repeat several times.

• To end your walking session, walk slowly for the last five minutes.
• Take another minute or two to gently stretch your leg muscles.

Stick with it!
Be patient with yourself even if you feel you’re not improving.
Make walking your top priority.