Iliac Artery Occlusive Disease

Iliac artery occlusive disease is blockage of the large arteries supplying blood to the pelvis and legs. Risk factors include diabetes, high blood pressure, and smoking. This blockage is treated differently depending on whether it developed slowly (progressive) or suddenly (acute). The typical symptoms of progressive disease are pain, numbness, and tiredness in the legs when walking and standing, which worsens with time and improves with rest. Typical symptoms of acute disease are sudden leg pain and weak pulse in the groin. The leg may turn cold or blue.

For patients with worsening symptoms, diagnosis is made by physical examination, including blood pressure difference between the leg and arm, blood test to measure fat (lipid) content, and an ultrasound scan of the leg. If the tests show decreased blood flow to the legs, a CT or MRI with intravenous contrast material designed to show blood vessels (CT angiography (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/angioct) or MR angiography (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/angiomr)) is used to find the blood vessel that is blocked and to figure out the size of the blockage.

Acute patients should be imaged with CT angiography. For patients that are allergic to the contrast material, results of the blood pressure testing and ultrasound are used for diagnosis.

Acute patients should be treated immediately with blood thinners. For both acute and progressive patients, CT angiography and MR angiography are used to decide between placing a catheter inside the artery near the blockage and dissolving it or surgically removing or bypassing it. Treatment may include medications that interfere with clot formation to prevent blockage from coming back. *For more information, see the Peripheral Artery Disease (https://www.radiologyinfo.org/en/info/pad) page.*

— By Søren Meibom, PhD, and Bruno Policeni, MD, MBA. This information originally appeared in the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*.

Disclaimer

This information is copied from the RadiologyInfo Web site (http://www.radiologyinfo.org) which is dedicated to providing the highest quality information. To ensure that, each section is reviewed by a physician with expertise in the area presented. All information contained in the Web site is further reviewed by an ACR (American College of Radiology) - RSNA (Radiological Society of North America) committee, comprising physicians with expertise in several radiologic areas.

However, it is not possible to assure that this Web site contains complete, up-to-date information on any particular subject. Therefore, ACR and RSNA make no representations or warranties about the suitability of this information for use for any particular purpose. All information is provided "as is" without express or implied warranty.

Please visit the RadiologyInfo Web site at **http://www.radiologyinfo.org** to view or download the latest information.

Note: Images may be shown for illustrative purposes. Do not attempt to draw conclusions or make diagnoses by comparing these images to other medical images, particularly your own. Only qualified physicians should interpret images; the radiologist is the physician expert trained in medical imaging.

Copyright

This material is copyrighted by either the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), 820 Jorie Boulevard, Oak Brook, IL 60523-2251 or the American College of Radiology (ACR), 1891 Preston White Drive, Reston, VA 20191-4397. Commercial reproduction or multiple distribution by any traditional or electronically based reproduction/publication method is prohibited.

Copyright ® 2026 Radiological Society of North America, Inc.