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Compassionate Care for Stronger, Healthier Hearts

Healthy
Hearts
Bright
Futures

How to Improve Leg Circulation

Better circulation supports healthy legs, an active lifestyle, and a healthier heart.



EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS

These strategies can help improve blood flow in the legs for most people:

Stay Active



- ✓ Aim for 30 minutes of walking most days.
- ✓ Other good options: cycling, swimming, or low-impact exercise.

Use Your Calf Muscles



- ✓ Do ankle pumps, heel raises, and gentle calf stretches.
- ✓ Move your ankles frequently when sitting or standing.

Elevate Your Legs



- ✓ For swelling or heaviness, raise your legs above heart level for 15–30 minutes, several times daily when possible.

Avoid Prolonged Sitting or Standing



- ✓ Get up and walk every 30–60 minutes.
- ✓ On long trips, move your ankles often and walk periodically.

Consider Compression Stockings



- ✓ Can help with venous insufficiency, varicose veins, and dependent swelling.
- ✓ Not for everyone—ask your clinician, especially if arterial disease is possible.

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle



- ✓ Stay well hydrated.
- ✓ Maintain a healthy weight.
- ✓ Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
- ✓ Avoid smoking or nicotine.

Control Cardiovascular Risk Factors



- ✓ Keep blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes well controlled.
- ✓ These help both heart and leg circulation.

GOOD FOR THE WHOLE YOU



- ✓ More energy
- ✓ Less swelling
- ✓ Healthier legs
- ✓ Better heart health
- ✓ An active, independent lifestyle



SAFETY PEARLS

- ✓ Start gradually if you are new to exercise.
- ✓ Compression stockings should be used under medical guidance (an ankle-brachial index [ABI] may be needed first if arterial disease is possible).
- ✓ Stay hydrated, especially during travel or hot weather.
- ✓ Avoid smoking or nicotine, which constricts blood vessels.
- ✓ If you have heart, kidney, or other medical conditions, ask your clinician what is right for you.



WHEN TO SEEK MEDICAL CARE

Seek medical evaluation if you have:

- ✓ Calf pain with walking that improves with rest.
- ✓ Persistently cold feet, weak pulses, numbness, or color changes.
- ✓ Ankle swelling, heaviness, varicose veins, or skin changes around the ankles.
- ✓ Non-healing wounds on the legs or feet.
- ✓ Symptoms that are getting worse or interfering with daily life.



Seek urgent medical care right away for:

- ✓ Sudden one-sided leg swelling, pain, redness, or warmth (possible blood clot/DVT).
- ✓ A suddenly cold, pale, or painful leg.
- ✓ Leg symptoms with chest pain or shortness of breath.



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UNDERSTANDING & MANAGEMENT OF POOR CIRCULATION

• IN THE HANDS & FEET •

Poor circulation is reduced blood flow to the extremities. It can be a sign of an underlying condition but can often be managed with the right care and lifestyle.



COMMON SYMPTOMS



HANDS

- Cold hands
- Pale, bluish, or mottled skin
- Numbness or tingling
- Pain or cramping
- Weak grip strength
- Slow wound healing



FEET

- Cold feet
- Numbness or burning sensation
- Leg fatigue when walking
- Cramping in the calves
- Color changes (pale, blue, or red)
- Delayed healing of cuts or sores



Persistent symptoms, pain, color changes, or non-healing wounds should never be ignored.

COMMON CAUSES

1 RAYNAUD'S PHENOMENON



Blood vessels spasm in response to cold or stress.

- White → blue → red
- Triggered by cold
- More common in women & young adults

2 PERIPHERAL ARTERY DISEASE (PAD)



Narrowing of arteries in the legs and feet.

Risk factors:

- Smoking
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Family history

3 DIABETES MELLITUS



Diabetes can damage blood vessels & nerves.

- Tingling or numbness
- Burning feet
- Loss of sensation
- Foot ulcers

4 DYSAUTONOMIA & POTS



Affects blood flow regulation.

- Cold hands & feet
- Acrocyanosis
- Dizziness on standing
- Fatigue, brain fog

5 HEART CONDITIONS



Poor cardiac output may reduce blood flow.

- Heart failure
- Valve disease
- Cardiomyopathy

6 VENOUS INSUFFICIENCY



Veins don't return blood efficiently to the heart.

- Swelling
- Leg heaviness
- Varicose veins
- Skin discoloration

7 AUTOIMMUNE DISORDERS



Inflammation & narrowing of blood vessels.

- Lupus
- Scleroderma
- Rheumatoid arthritis

8 ANEMIA



Low hemoglobin reduces oxygen delivery.

- Cold extremities
- Fatigue
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath

EVALUATION

Your doctor may recommend:



PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

- Pulse assessment
- Blood pressure measurements
- Skin color & temperature evaluation



LABORATORY TESTS

- Complete blood count (CBC)
- Iron studies
- Thyroid function tests
- Blood glucose & HbA1c
- Lipid profile
- Autoimmune screening (when indicated)



IMAGING & SPECIALIZED TESTING

- Arterial Doppler ultrasound
- Venous Doppler ultrasound
- Ankle-Brachial Index (ABI)
- Echocardiogram
- Autonomic testing (for POTS or dysautonomia)

MANAGEMENT



LIFESTYLE MEASURES



Stay Active: Regular exercise improves circulation. (Walking, cycling, swimming, resistance training)



Stay Warm: Wear gloves & warm socks. Avoid sudden cold exposure.



Hydration: Drink plenty of fluids, especially important for POTS & dysautonomia.



Avoid Smoking & Vaping: Nicotine constricts blood vessels and worsens circulation.



NUTRITION

Focus on:

- Fruits & vegetables
- Whole grains
- Lean proteins
- Omega-3-rich foods (fish, walnuts, flaxseed)

Limit:

- Excess sugar
- Processed foods
- Trans fats



COMPRESSION GARMENTS

May help with:

- Venous insufficiency
- Orthostatic intolerance
- POTS

Use under medical guidance, especially if arterial disease is suspected.



MEDICATIONS

Treatment depends on the underlying cause and may include:

- Calcium channel blockers (Raynaud's)
- Antiplatelet therapy (PAD)
- Cholesterol-lowering medications
- Diabetes medications
- Iron supplementation (anemia)
- Medications for dysautonomia/POTS



SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL ATTENTION IF YOU EXPERIENCE:



Sudden severe pain in an arm or leg



A cold, pale, or blue limb that develops suddenly



Loss of pulses



Non-healing wounds



Blackened skin or tissue



Chest pain or shortness of breath

These may indicate a vascular emergency requiring prompt treatment.



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