This is a guide only and does not replace clinical judgment.

References:
National Clinical Guideline Centre, Lower limb peripheral arterial disease. Diagnosis and management. NICE Clinical Guideline 147 Methods, evidence and recommendations, 2012: London

Champions for Skin Integrity

60 Musk Ave
Kelvin Grove Qld 4059
Brisbane, Australia
Phone: + 61 7 3138 6000 or
Fax: +61 7 3138 6030 or
Email: ihbi@qut.edu.au
Email (Wound Healing): woundservice@qut.edu.au
CRICOS No. 00213J

www.ihbi.qut.edu.au

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Arterial Leg Ulcer

What is an arterial leg ulcer?

- An arterial leg ulcer is a sore or break in the skin as a result of blocked or hardened arteries
- Arteries supply blood which carry oxygen and nutrients to the muscles and skin of the legs and feet
- If circulation is poor the leg is starved of oxygen and nutrients and the skin is more likely to break down
- They usually occur over the toes, shin or pressure areas of the feet and legs
- They may cause severe pain at rest, which often increases with leg elevation or walking

Risk Factors

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- A history of heart disease
- Obesity
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Diabetes
- A high cholesterol level

How are they managed?

- Consult a health professional with skills in wound management
- Blood supply and healing may be improved by:
  - keeping your feet and legs warm
  - gentle leg and ankle exercises
- Follow your health professional’s advice on how to manage pain

How can you help prevent an arterial leg ulcer?

✔ Do

- Gently exercise to increase blood flow
- Eat a healthy diet
- Inspect feet and legs daily – a mirror may help
- Quit smoking
- Control diabetes
- Control your cholesterol and blood pressure levels
- Maintain an ideal weight
- Wear well fitting shoes and orthotics as necessary
- Avoid injury. Take care to avoid bumps and sharp corners
- Extreme care is needed when cutting toe nails—preferably ask a podiatrist

✗ Don’t

- Do not sit or stand in one position for a long time or cross your legs