

Patient information

Healthy Arteries

Vascular Department

Risk factors for arterial disease

Arterial disease is very common especially as we get older with atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) being the cause of most, but not all, coronary heart disease, stroke and peripheral vascular disease.

Risks for arterial disease can be divided into high and low risk and also divided into those risks that we, or you can do something about and those that are fixed risks. A fixed risk would be your age – we can't go back in time to a younger age.

Other fixed risks include our genetics and family history – we can't yet change our DNA. However, there are risks that can be lowered and by doing this, you can reduce the chance of peripheral arterial disease (PAD), heart disease and stroke and therefore prolong your lifespan.

A common misunderstanding is that the damage has already been done and that it's 'too late to change at my age'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Smoking

Smoking is the single greatest risk for vascular disease and it's a risk that can be reduced by stopping smoking. Although there is some benefit in cutting down tobacco you have to stop completely to have any useful or long lasting benefit. All tobacco use carries the same risk and there does not seem to be any vascular benefit with low tar cigarettes over the higher ones.

Smoking has several effects including a direct toxic effect to the lining of the arteries but it also stops the blood cells from carrying oxygen by loading them with carbon monoxide. More red blood cells have to be made making the blood thicker than it should be and giving an increased risk of thrombosis.

Giving up smoking is not easy because it contains an addictive drug (nicotine). Heavy smokers will need nicotine replacement therapy with a skin patch, gum or nasal spray to get over the initial 'drug dependency'. The psychological aspects of stopping smoking are equally difficult to overcome and a good deal of willpower and repeated attempts on your part may be necessary before you succeed.



The NHS is there to help you with prescription medications, nicotine replacement and support – please ask a member of staff if you need help to stop smoking.

High Blood Pressure

Hypertension (high blood pressure) is another factor for vascular disease that can be treated. Usually there are no symptoms so that the first diagnosis comes with a routine check of your blood pressure from your family doctor (GP) or in hospital.

Undiagnosed hypertension increases the risk of all vascular disease but particularly stroke and heart disease. Most patients are successfully treated by their family doctor with one or a combination of prescription medications. Regular check-ups are required. Once diagnosed with high blood pressure you will usually stay on treatment for life.

High cholesterol

High levels of cholesterol in the blood can build up in the wall of an artery and cause atherosclerotic plaques (hardening of the arteries) that reduce the diameter of the inside of the artery.

The artery may be completely blocked if a plaque bursts causing a thrombosis. Stroke and heart attack is commonly caused by this mechanism.

Cholesterol is a feature of our metabolism and can be inherited. Nevertheless you should watch your diet and reduce the total amount of fat that you eat – most cholesterol is manufactured inside us from other fats in the diet meaning that just reducing your cholesterol intake will not be enough.

Prescription medication with statins and other drugs can reduce the blood cholesterol and therefore reduce your vascular risk. Statins have other excellent effects of stabilising the lining cells of the blood vessels and thereby reducing the development of atherosclerosis.

Excess alcohol

Alcohol can increase your cholesterol and triglycerides (circulating fats) in the blood and cause fatty deposits in the liver. Excess alcohol is turned into fat that will increase your body weight.

Diet and exercise

A well balanced diet with fruit and vegetables every day and white meat and fish (rather than red meat every day) will be beneficial to your whole metabolism and reduce the risks of many diseases. Control of portion size is important to avoid overeating and the risk of obesity.

Exercise makes us healthier in many aspects and reduces risks of vascular disease, cancer and many other conditions.

Exercise does not have to involve a gym or any expense – simple walking for 20 minutes a day, every day will improve your overall health and decrease your vascular risks.

Do not start a strenuous exercise programme without taking advice from your GP.



Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

LiVES Contact Numbers

During your contact with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

Vascular Ward

Ward 3

Aintree University Hospital

Tel: 0151 529 2028/2262

Vascular Nurses:

Aintree via switchboard

Tel: 0151 525 5980 Bleep 5609/5594 or extensions 4691/4692

Royal Liverpool Hospital via switchboard

Tel: 0151 706 2000 Bleep 4212 or extension 4675

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2000 Bleep 4212

Southport via switchboard

Tel: 01704 705124

Whiston Hospital

0151 290 4508/ 430 4199

Secretaries:

Aintree University Hospital

Tel: 0151 706 3691/ 3523/3524/3481/3457/11813

0151 529 4950/4953

Southport/Ormskirk Tel: 01704 704665



**Whiston Hospital
St. Helens and Knowsley NHS Trust
Tel: 0151 430 1499**

**NHS 111
Tel: 111**

**Circulation Foundation:
www.circulationfoundation.org.uk/vascular-disease/**

Smoking cessation:

Liverpool	Tel: 0800 061 4212/ 0151 374 2535
Sefton	Tel: 0300 100 1000
West Lancashire	Tel: 0800 328 6297

**Liverpool Vascular and Endovascular Service
Aintree University Hospital
Lower Lane
Liverpool
L9 7AL
Tel: 0151 525 5980
vascsecs@liverpoolft.nhs.uk**

Participating Hospitals in LiVES are:

- **Liverpool University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust**
- **Southport District General Hospital**
- **Ormskirk District General Hospital**
- **Whiston and St Helens Hospitals**

**Author: Vascular Department
Review Date: September 2025**



All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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所有經信托基金批准的患者資訊均可以其它格式提供，包括其它語言、易讀閱讀軟件、大字

體、音頻、盲文、穆恩體 (Moon) 盲文和電子格式，敬請索取。

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