

Angioplasty may be risky for those with poor leg circulation

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Image courtesy of Blausen Medical

Procedure to open heart arteries linked to raised death rate in people with peripheral artery disease.

(HealthDay) -- People with peripheral artery disease have an increased short- and long-term risk of death after undergoing a procedure to open clogged heart arteries, a new study finds.

Peripheral artery disease (PAD) is a build-up of plaque in the blood vessels of the legs and organs of the body. These cholesterol blockages can interfere with blood flow and cause pain and cramping in the legs, sores that don't heal properly, abdominal pain, [high blood pressure](#) and other health problems.

For the study, researchers looked at data from nearly 2,500 heart disease patients who underwent percutaneous [coronary intervention](#) (which includes both angioplasty and stenting) to open clogged [heart arteries](#). Of those patients, 7 percent also had peripheral artery disease.

The death rate while patients were in hospital immediately after the procedure was much higher for those with peripheral artery disease than those without the disease -- 1.7 percent vs. 0.1 percent. There was not a significant difference between the two groups in their rates of heart attack, stroke and other major complications.

Over an average follow-up of 4.4 years, the

patients with peripheral artery disease also had a much higher death rate than those without the disease -- 23.8 percent vs. 10.8 percent. But after the researchers took into account other medical conditions and factors that might influence patients' health, long-term death rates were similar for patients with and without peripheral artery disease.

This finding highlights the importance of ongoing [preventive measures](#) ([healthy diet](#), adequate exercise) To manage [cholesterol levels](#), diabetes and high blood pressure in patients with [peripheral artery disease](#) who undergo angioplasty and stenting, according to Dr. Konstantinos Charitakis, a cardiology fellow at New York-Presbyterian Hospital in New York City, and colleagues.

Charitakis was scheduled to present the findings Wednesday at a meeting of the Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions (SCAI) in Las Vegas.

"People with peripheral [artery] disease tend to have worse outcomes over the long term, and it may be because they have many other health problems that increase the severity of atherosclerosis and make it more likely they'll have a heart attack or stroke in the future," Charitakis said in an SCAI news release. "If we focus on treating those health problems, we may be able to improve long-term outcomes in this high-risk group of patients."

Research presented at medical meetings should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

More information: The U.S. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has more about [peripheral artery disease](#).

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