



New Rehabilitation Program to Help Those with Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD)

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O'FALLON, IL – To help those living with peripheral arterial disease, HSHS St. Elizabeth's Hospital recently added a new cardiopulmonary rehabilitation program, Supervised Exercise Therapy (SET) for Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD).

PAD is a vascular disease caused by a gradual build-up of plaque within the leg arteries. It may cause disabling symptoms, such as:

- Leg cramping while walking
- Leg pain while resting
- Nerve damage
- Skin breakdown

According to the American Heart Association, PAD is more common as people get older. It affects about 8.5 million Americans over the age of 40. There are certain risk factors that can not be controlled such as aging and family history of PAD, cardiovascular disease or stroke. However, you can control the following risk factors:

- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Overweight or obesity
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Physical inactivity

Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation at St. Elizabeth's is proud to introduce this patient-focused exercise program that is tailored to people with PAD.

“The SET program at St. Elizabeth’s pairs individualized moderate-intensity exercise training with lifestyle recommendations, provided by a professional staff of nurses, exercise physiologists, a registered dietitian, and a pharmacist,” said Program Coordinator Nicole Toennies, MS.

The SET program targets the muscles that hurt when you walk, such as the calf, thigh, and buttock. “The goals for SET for people with PAD are to decrease symptoms, increase walking distance and functional capacity and to reduce risk factors and prevention of heart attack and stroke,” added Toennies.

This program offers the following:

- Monitored and supervised exercise to improve circulation.
- Assessment and plan for exercise to improve functional ability and decrease symptoms.
- A series of 36 one-hour sessions
- Coverage by most insurances.

A physician referral and a diagnosis of symptomatic PAD are needed to be accepted into the program. Tests may be completed by the patient’s primary physician to verify PAD, including non-invasive ankle-brachial index (ABI) testing.