ACUTE LIMB ISCHEMIA
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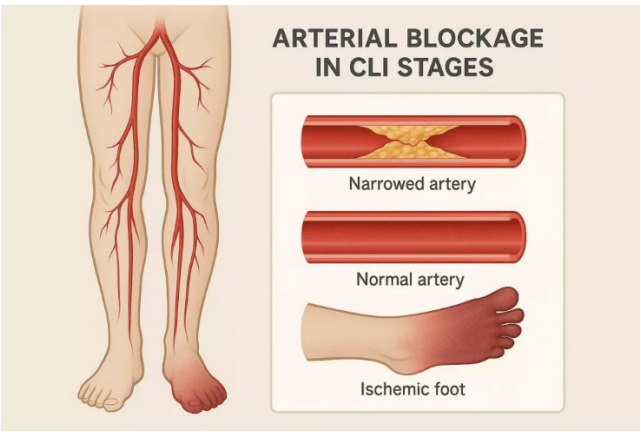
Acute limb ischemia is a vascular emergency, caused by a sudden blockage of the blood supply to an arm or leg. This can lead to irreversible nerve damage within 4-6 hours, muscle damage withing 6 – 8 hours and skin damage within 8-12 hours from onset of the blockage. It is, therefore, imperative that this condition is treated immediately and you present to an emergency unit as soon as symptoms occur to prevent a major amputation or possible death due to concurrent illnesses. Minor amputation of toes or fingers may still be necessary depending on stage of acute limb ischemia at time of surgery.

An acute limb ischemia's common symptoms include abrupt onsite of significant pain, pale, cold, numb limb with loss of pulse and paralysis of the affected limb. Although pain is the predominate driving force for most patients seeking help.

Causes of an acute limb ischemia include dislodgment of a clot from somewhere else in your body, most commonly the heart; the formation of a new clot due to the narrowing of the blood vessels secondary to chronic conditions such as atherosclerosis; complications such as bypass graft failure, vasculitis, aneurysmal clot formation or trauma (such as a dislocated knee or mangled limb).

Treatment for acute limb ischemia include a thromboembolectomy (removal of clot which caused the blockage); open surgical revascularization with bypass surgery, endovascular revascularization or intravenous Heparin which might be successful in the cases of acute on chronic limb ischemia.

Compartment syndrome is common with acute limb ischemia due increased leaky capillaries which occurs when blood is reintroduced to the lim. This causes oedema and increased pressure within the muscle compartments of the limb, which could lead to further nerve and muscle damage after surgery. Therefore, a fasciotomy is commonly performed during the operation to optimize reperfusion during the post-surgical recovery period and offer the patient the best possible outcome. (Annals of vascular disease).



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