

Buerger's Disease is also known as thromboangiitis obliterans and is a rare disease which often presents in young males between the ages of 20 - 45 years of age, who have a history of smoking. The disease affects the small and medium arteries of the body, more commonly in the arms, legs, feet and hands. Inflammation of the blood vessels, slows down the blood flow, making the blood sluggish, this in turn creates clots. The combination of sluggish blood due to inflammation and clot formation results in ischemia (lack of oxygen) to the tips of toes and fingers. This results in tissue damage, pain and discolouration.

Symptoms:

Initial symptoms may include burning and tingling of the hands and feet. Pain and cramps are also common. Fingers and toes then turn pale, red or bluish, especially when cold. Numbness and coldness of extremities may accompany ankle, foot or leg pain (claudication) when walking, [Raynaud's syndrome](#), and skin colour and texture changes. Finally, painful ulcers or sores on the fingers and toes that don't heal and gangrene.

Risk factors:

There is strong evidence that this condition is driven by tobacco, marijuana and nicotine products and stopping all related products including e-cigarettes is imperative.

Research indicates that when affected patients continue to smoke, 43% require 1 or more amputations in 7.6 years.

There is a definite increase in prevalence among males aged 20-45 years.

Management:

Although there is no cure, this condition can be managed with calcium channel blockers or other vasodilators and healthy lifestyle changes.

Medication can be given for pain relief and surgery with amputation may be needed in severe cases to prevent widespread tissue death (gangrene) spreading up the arms and legs.

BUERGER'S DISEASE

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All forms of tobacco, marijuana and nicotine products must be stopped, and patients must avoid smoking areas, as exposure to second hand smoke can also trigger the condition.

Buerger's disease can be debilitating especially if ignored and the patient continues to smoke. Early detection, treatment and cessation of smoking will have the best outcome.



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