

What Does That Leg Pain Really Mean?

JOHN METTAM RECALLS HAVING SOME LEG PAIN WHEN HE WALKED BUT IT STOPPED WHEN HE SAT DOWN. HE ATTRIBUTED IT TO WORKING AT A DESK ALL DAY AND A LACK OF EXERCISE. THEN CAME THE DAY HE COULD BARELY MAKE IT FROM THE PARKING GARAGE TO HIS OFFICE.

The 65-year-old budget analyst who lives in Ridge in St. Mary's County saw his primary care physician who referred him to the Center for Vascular Care at Calvert Memorial Hospital. The center, which opened in 2007, is a collaborative effort with Washington Hospital Center that brings the region's top vascular surgeons to our community.

Turns out the intermittent pain Mettam was feeling was "*claudication*" – a common symptom of peripheral arterial disease or PAD which results from the buildup of plaque or fatty deposits in the arteries. His condition was complicated

by his diabetes. "I was diagnosed with type 2 at age 30. My father, grandfather and both brothers also have it," he explained. "When you're diabetic, your blood vessels are continuing to narrow. So, it's like an ongoing battle."

Diagnostic testing revealed he had a blockage behind his left knee. "That's when I realized I wasn't going to be able to rub some magic cream on it and make it go away," said Mettam. He discussed his treatment options with **Dr. Frederick Beavers** and elected to go with bypass surgery because even though it meant a more difficult recuperation it offered a more long-term solution.

"Dr. Beavers explained all of my options and what to expect in great detail," said Mettam. "He doesn't pull any punches but I like that because then you feel confident."

While the surgery was performed at Washington Hospital Center, Mettam said he was able to have his initial consultation, diagnostic testing and follow-up care at CMH. "I could pretty much do everything there (at Calvert)," he said. "I even had an angiogram there and a touch-up on my bypass in June."

He went on to add, "It's just great that they have the vascular center at Calvert (Memorial) and that they have some of the best doctors around staffing it. If you want somebody to fix you up, they're the people to see."

Dr. Beavers, who is director of endovascular surgery at Washington Hospital Center, heads up the Center for Vascular Care at Calvert Memorial Hospital. The CMH team also includes vascular surgeons **Dr. James Salander** and **Dr. Paul Foley, III**. They are joined by certified nurse practitioner **Donna Norris**, who has 26 years of cardiovascular nursing experience. Vascular surgeon **Dr. Nancy Clark**,

PAD Risk Factors You Can Control

- ✓ **Stop smoking:** Smokers may have four times the risk of PAD than nonsmokers.
- ✓ **Reduce your weight:** People with a Body Mass Index (BMI) of 25 or higher are more likely to develop heart disease and stroke even if they have no other risk factors.
- ✓ **Manage your blood sugar levels:** Having diabetes puts you at greater risk of developing PAD as well as other cardiovascular diseases.
- ✓ **Get moving:** Physical activity increases the distance that people with PAD can walk without pain and also helps decrease the risk of heart attack or stroke.
- ✓ **Manage your cholesterol levels:** High cholesterol contributes to the build-up of plaque in the arteries, which can significantly reduce the blood's flow.
- ✓ **Control your blood pressure:** It's sometimes called "the silent killer" because it has no symptoms.

You can choose more than one target to improve!

who directs the hospital's wound care program, also sees patients two days per week at the vascular center.

"For the first month after surgery, I was basically limited to watching the grass grow," he said with a laugh. "But since then the pain has gotten a lot better and even though I'm not 100 percent, I try to do a little more every day."

The Center for Vascular Care, located in Suite 213 of the Calvert Medical Office Building (*next to the hospital*), commonly sees patients for dialysis access, carotid disease, lower extremity peripheral arterial disease, aortic and thoracic aneurysms and renal stenosis. **For more information, call 410-414-2790.**

