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# Vascular Surgery

## Five Things Physicians and Patients Should Question

by  
Canadian Society for Vascular Surgery  
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**1 Don't perform percutaneous interventions or bypass surgery as first line therapy in patients with asymptomatic peripheral arterial disease (PAD) and in most patients with claudication.**

PAD is a marker of a systemic disease and patients with PAD may have atherosclerotic disease in other vascular beds, including the carotid and coronary circulation. Patients with mild to moderate PAD have a higher 5 year risk of stroke, myocardial infarction or cardiovascular death than amputation. Initial therapy should include smoking cessation and risk factor modification, medical therapy and a walking program. Lower extremity bypass surgery and endovascular therapy should be reserved for patients with limb threatening ischemia or truly disabling claudication.

**2 Don't perform carotid endarterectomies or stenting in most asymptomatic high risk patients with limited life expectancy.**

The purpose of carotid artery surgery and stenting is to prevent stroke and, when combined with appropriate medical therapy, is a successful strategy in selected, mainly symptomatic, patients. Medical therapy alone is an effective alternative in many asymptomatic patients and safer in those who are elderly or at high risk for surgery and stenting and don't have the life expectancy to benefit from such a prophylactic procedure.

**3 Don't perform open or endovascular repair in most asymptomatic patients with small abdominal aortic aneurysms (<5cm in women, <5.5cm in men).**

Repair of asymptomatic abdominal aortic aneurysms is recommended when the risk of rupture exceeds the risk of repair. Randomized controlled trials have failed to show a survival benefit for open or endovascular repair of most small aneurysms. Repair may be considered with specific growth patterns and aneurysm morphology.

**4 Don't perform endovascular repair of abdominal aortic aneurysms in most asymptomatic high-risk patients with limited life expectancy.**

Repair of asymptomatic abdominal aortic aneurysms is recommended when the risk of rupture exceeds the risk of repair and is performed in patients with sufficient life expectancy to allow them to benefit from such a prophylactic procedure. Most elderly, or medically high risk patients, have insufficient life expectancy and are at higher risk of complications following endovascular repair to warrant intervention.

**5 Don't perform unnecessarily frequent ultrasound examinations in asymptomatic patients with small abdominal aortic aneurysms. Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms between 4 to 4.9 cm in diameter should be surveyed by annual ultrasound.**

Regular ultrasound examination of asymptomatic patients with small abdominal aortic aneurysms is essential to document aneurysm growth and decide when intervention is warranted. The interval between examinations is dictated by the size of the aneurysm and its expected growth rate. Too frequent examinations can cause undue patient anxiety and are not cost effective.

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## How the list was created

The Canadian Society for Vascular Surgery (CSVS) established its Choosing Wisely Canada Top 5 recommendations by canvassing its members for suggestions for investigations or procedures that should not be performed, should be performed rarely or should only be performed under certain circumstances. A subgroup of the CSVS Executive Committee reviewed the membership's suggestions and made a list of five draft recommendations. The CSVS Executive Committee provided feedback and the evidence and literature were reviewed to make sure these recommendations were evidence based. The final list was approved by the CSVS Executive Committee.

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## Sources

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## About the Canadian Anesthesiologists' Society

The Canadian Society for Vascular Surgery (CSVS) is a proud partner of the Choosing Wisely Canada campaign. The Canadian Society for Vascular Surgery is dedicated to excellence in the promotion of vascular health for Canadians through education, research, collaboration and advocacy.



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## About Choosing Wisely Canada

Choosing Wisely Canada is the national voice for reducing unnecessary tests and treatments in health care. One of its important functions is to help clinicians and patients engage in conversations that lead to smart and effective care choices.

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