



National
Screening for
Vascular Disease

Know Your Risk For Nation's Top Killers

Women May Be at Higher Risk

FAIRFAX, Va., Sept. 1, 2004 - Vascular diseases caused by arteriosclerosis (clogged blood vessels) - including most heart attacks and strokes - account for more deaths in the U.S. than any other cause. Peripheral vascular disease (PVD), also known as peripheral arterial disease (PAD) affects more than 10 million Americans and often is a warning sign that other vascular diseases may be present. Women may be more likely than men to have PVD without experiencing symptoms, which could put them at greater risk of developing serious disease before it is diagnosed and treated.

Throughout the month of September, National PVD Awareness Month, more than 300 U.S. hospitals and clinics across the country will offer free screenings as part of the Legs For Life® National Screening for Vascular Disease.

Legs For Life will screen tens of thousands of Americans from "head to toe" to identify risk factors for potentially deadly vascular diseases, including stroke, abdominal aortic aneurysm, and PVD.

Legs For Life, now in its seventh year, is the longest running and most successful screening program of its kind.

"Nearly 300,000 people have been screened since we began this program, which consistently has found that 1 out of every 4 participants is at significant risk for PVD or other serious vascular conditions. Studies of Legs For Life programs also have shown that women may be at particularly high risk," said Harvey Wiener, D.O., the 2004 national chairman of the Legs For Life Program.

All sites will screen for PVD and provide educational information on other vascular conditions. PVD - or clogged arteries in the legs - is potentially life-threatening, and also is an indicator for other serious vascular diseases. Many sites also will screen for venous disease, risk factors for stroke and abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA).

According to Dr. Wiener, between 22 percent and 25 percent of people were found to be at risk for AAA since screening for the condition was added to the Legs For Life program in 2001. Those at highest risk for vascular disease include people over age 50, those with a family history of cardiovascular disease, diabetics, smokers and people with high blood pressure, high cholesterol or who are obese.

Participants in Legs For Life screenings fill out a lifestyle questionnaire to help determine their risk for PVD, and may undergo simple, painless tests such as an ABI, which is comparative blood pressure readings in the arm and ankle. In addition to screening for PVD, select sites also will use risk assessment questionnaires and ultrasounds to screen for one or more of the following vascular diseases.

- **Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA or Triple A)** - The 17th leading cause of death in the U.S., AAA is a weakened area in the aorta, the main vessel that carries oxygen-rich blood from the heart to the rest of the body. Like a balloon, the weakened area can bulge and/or burst. When an AAA bursts, it is fatal more than 80 percent of the time.
- **Stroke** - About 600,000 Americans suffer strokes every year. It is the third leading cause of death and a major cause of disability. The most common cause is a clot or blockage in the carotid arteries - the major vessels that supply blood to the brain. In stroke, the brain cells are deprived of the oxygen they need to survive, often resulting in permanent brain damage or death.
- **Venous Disease** - Approximately half of the U.S. population suffers from venous disease, usually due to malfunctioning valves in the veins (the vessels that return blood to the heart) that cause blood to flow backward and form pools. Venous diseases include varicose veins (swollen, rope-like veins, most often in the legs), vasculitis or phlebitis (inflammation of a blood vessel), deep vein thrombosis (DVT) (blood clots in veins that can be fatal if they break off and travel to the lung, a condition called pulmonary embolism or PE), and venous stasis (a temporary or chronic disorder in which the normal flow of blood through a vein is slowed or halted).

Those determined to be at moderate or high risk for any of these diseases will consult with a Legs For Life screening physician, who will refer them to their primary care physicians (PCPs) for follow up, and also will notify their PCPs of screening results.

For more information and to locate a local screening site, visit www.legsforlife.org.

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Legs For Life® is the largest, longest running, and most inclusive national vascular disease screening program in the United States. Legs For Life was founded by the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) in 1997, piloted in 1998 and launched nationally in 1999. Collaborating organizations include the American Diabetes Association, the American Radiological Nurses Association, the Council on Cardiovascular Radiology and Intervention of the American Heart Association and the Society for Vascular Nursing. Program funding is administered by the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation.

Legs For Life initially was launched with unrestricted educational grants from Boston Scientific Corporation and Abbott Laboratories. Guidant Foundation is funding the next three-year cycle (2003-2005) by generously providing its second \$1 million grant for Legs For Life.