



News Release

For Immediate Release

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Are You at Risk for Potentially Deadly Cardiovascular Diseases? A Free “Legs For Life” Screening Will Help You Find Out

FAIRFAX, Va., Aug. 19 – More than 10 million Americans are having a “heart attack” in their legs – peripheral vascular disease (PVD) – and yet many of them don’t know it. A nationwide campaign called “[Legs For Life®](#)” strives to motivate Americans to prevent, detect and treat this and other potentially deadly cardiovascular diseases.

Legs For Life At-A-Glance

- ? 10 million Americans have PVD, putting them at increased risk of heart attack, stroke and life-threatening aneurysms.
- ? Tens of thousands of people are expected to be screened for PVD at free Legs For Life screenings in 300+ U.S. hospitals across the nation. Each year, one out of four people screened was found to be at risk.
- ? AAA, sometimes called a “silent killer” because there are no warning symptoms, accounts for approximately 15,000 deaths in the U.S. every year.
- ? Consumers can locate nearby screening sites and request free PVD and AAA brochures by visiting www.legsforlife.org or calling toll-free 877-357-2847.

PVD, a potentially fatal disease that is common in individuals over age 50, is caused by blocked blood flow to the arteries of the legs. PVD automatically puts people at increased risk of heart attack, stroke and life-threatening abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). Though symptoms are not always present, PVD can cause pain or swelling, difficulty walking, numbness and skin discoloration. Simple, non-invasive blood pressure tests let people know if they are at risk.

“Early detection of PVD is essential. If the arteries in your legs are clogged, others arteries are likely clogged, too” says Peter T. Beatty, M.D., the National Chairman of the Legs For Life Program. “Diabetics, smokers and people with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels are at increased risk.”

Tens of thousands of Americans will be screened for PVD Sept. 22 – 28 as part of *Legs For Life® National PVD Screening Week*, a free, nationwide program to identify people at risk for PVD. Legs For Life is implemented by multidisciplinary teams of vascular specialists (interventional radiologists, cardiologists and vascular surgeons), all of whom donate their time to the screening effort. Screenings will be held in more than 300 U.S. hospitals, making Legs For Life the longest running and most successful screening program of its kind.

PVD - An Early Warning Sign of Other Disorders

Many individuals who are at risk for PVD are also at risk for heart attack, stroke and abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA or Triple A). Most Legs For Life screening sites also will provide information about AAA, and nearly half are planning to screen for this deadly disease in addition to PVD.

AAA, the 17th leading cause of death in the U.S., is caused by a weakened area in the main vessel that supplies blood from the heart to the rest of the body. When blood flows through the aorta, the weakened area bulges like a balloon. If the balloon grows large enough, there is a danger that it will burst, resulting in death over 80 percent of the time. Those at highest risk for AAA are males over the age of 60 who have ever smoked and/or who have a history of hardening of the arteries. Also at risk are individuals with a family history of AAA.

AAA is often called a “silent killer” because there are usually no obvious symptoms of the disease. When symptoms are present, they may include severe abdominal pain (that may be constant or come and go); pain in the lower back that may radiate to the buttocks, groin or legs; or the feeling of a “heartbeat” or pulse in the abdomen. AAA is typically detected through the use of ultrasound, a painless exam that produces “pictures” of the aorta to detect the presence of AAA. Small AAAs (less than 5 centimeters, or about 2 inches) rarely rupture and often require no treatment other than “watchful waiting” under the guidance of a vascular disease specialist. Aneurysms greater than 5 centimeters in size typically require treatment to prevent rupture.

In 2001, AAA's pilot year in *Legs For Life*,[®] 11,000 people were screened for AAA. Nearly 1 in 4 people was determined to be at risk.

Ten Minutes to Better Health

During free Legs For Life screenings, patients are asked to fill out a lifestyle questionnaire to help determine their risk for PVD. A 10-minute PVD screening exam involves taking the person's arm and ankle blood pressure to further assess the potential of disease. Sites conducting AAA screenings will use either a brief risk factors questionnaire alone, or the questionnaire in combination with ultrasound screening of individuals with AAA risk factors. Patients found to be at moderate or high risk for PVD and/or AAA are referred to their primary care physician for further evaluation.

Resources for Consumers

Beginning in August, consumers can visit the Legs For Life Web site, www.legsforlife.org, or call the toll-free consumer information line, 877-357-2847, to locate screening sites and request free PVD and AAA brochures.

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 (ADA), the American Radiological Nurses Association (ARNA), the Council on Cardiovascular Radiology and Intervention of the American Heart Association, the Society for Vascular Medicine and Biology (SVMB), and the Society for Vascular Nursing (SVN). Program funding is administered by the Cardiovascular and Interventional Radiology Research and Education Foundation (CIRREF).

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