



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## African-Americans Have Same Risk As Pack-A-Day Smokers For Developing Peripheral Arterial Disease, A Marker For Heart Attack And Stroke

(NAPSA)—Leg pain, kidney damage, stroke, gangrene and heart attacks can often all be traced back to one thing—peripheral arterial disease. But with early detection, many people could avoid these conditions that result when arterial disease progresses untreated.

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is hardening of the arteries in the legs, most often due to atherosclerosis that occurs when plaque builds up inside the arteries, causing them to clog and narrow. Because atherosclerosis is a systemic disease, people with PAD are likely to develop blocked arteries throughout the body, putting them at risk for heart attack and stroke.

Although 10 million Americans have PAD, African-Americans are twice as likely to develop it. Their increased risk makes them as vulnerable as someone who has smoked a pack of cigarettes a day for 20 years.

More than 50 percent of PAD patients are asymptomatic and cannot feel the classic warning sign of PAD—intermittent claudication, or leg pain that occurs when walking or exercising and disappears when the person stops the activity. “Screening is essential because most people do not present classic symptoms—and by the time they do notice they have a problem, they are often facing gangrene, amputation, kidney damage or stroke,” says Harvey Wiener, DO, Legs For Life® Chair.

During the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation’s free national PAD screening program, Legs For Life®, an ankle brachial index (ABI) test is used to detect PAD. This quick, painless test

### Get An ABI Test If You:

- Have diabetes
- Smoke now or have ever smoked
- Are over age 50
- Have a family history of vascular disease, such as PAD, aneurysm, heart attack or stroke
- Have high cholesterol or a high lipid blood test
- Are overweight
- Have an inactive lifestyle
- Have a personal history of high blood pressure, heart disease or other vascular disease
- Have cramping or tiredness in the muscle when walking or exercising, which is relieved by resting
- Have pain in the legs or feet that awakens you at night.



compares the blood pressure in the legs to the blood pressure in the arms to determine how well the blood is flowing and whether a person has PAD.

If detected, interventional radiologists, who run Legs For Life, can intervene early, prevent vascular disease progression and provide nonsurgical treatment, if needed. PAD treatments may include a walking program, medication and angioplasty and stenting.

Wiener stressed, “African-Americans and other high-risk groups need to get in the habit of getting an annual ABI test that can diagnose PAD. People need to know their ABI number the way they know their cholesterol, blood pressure or blood sugar number—it can save their life.”

More information and an online assessment test for PAD can be found at the Legs For Life Web site, [www.LegsForLife.org](http://www.LegsForLife.org).