



# Health Awareness

## Avoid Amputation, Heart Attack and Stroke— Listen to Your Ankle

(NAPSA)—If you listen closely, your ankle can tell you a lot. Quiet now, listen. Thump, thump, thump. There it is—that drumbeat sound that speaks volumes. What your ankle is drumming out is the health of your vascular system—think of it as Morse code telling you how well your circulation is working, and more importantly, if you have any blocked arteries that can lead to a heart attack, stroke or amputation.

Your ankle “talks” during an ABI test, or ankle brachial index test. This quick, painless test compares the blood pressure in your legs to the blood pressure in your arms. If you have an ABI score of less than 1.0, you could have peripheral arterial disease.

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) is atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. Cholesterol or calcium “plaque” builds up inside the arteries causing them to clog and narrow. Over time, the plaque blocks smaller arteries first, such as those in the legs, and then eventually the larger or high-flow arteries, such as those in the heart or the carotid arteries to the brain.

Although 10 million Americans have peripheral arterial disease (PAD), diabetics are at highest risk with one in three over age 50 affected. PAD is also the cause of 50 percent of all diabetic amputations.

“Your ABI score is a red flag—that number tells us if you have blocked arteries and whether you are at risk for gangrene, stroke, kidney damage, heart attack or

### 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



amputation,” explained Dr. Harvey Wiener, interventional radiologist and Legs For Life Chair. “Diabetics, smokers, people over 50 and those with high blood pressure need to have an annual ABI test. Knowing your ABI number can save your life.”

Through its Legs For Life program, the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation is offering free ABI screenings nationwide to detect PAD early. Treatments for PAD include a walking program, medication, and angioplasty and stenting.

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).