



## Early Warning Symptoms

(NAPSA)—Knowing the signs of peripheral arterial disease (PAD) may save the lives of thousands of women every year. PAD is a common circulation problem in which the arteries that carry blood to the legs or arms become narrowed or clogged. This is a red flag that could be a sign of heart disease, the No. 1 killer of women in the United States.

### Understanding PAD

The most common cause of PAD is atherosclerosis—hardening of the arteries. Cholesterol and scar tissue build up, forming plaque that clogs the blood vessels and keeps blood from passing through as needed, restricting oxygen and other nutrients from getting to healthy tissue.

### The Risks

Women with PAD have four times the risk of heart attack and stroke. The disease's progression results in death for about one-third of patients.

### The Symptoms

Of the 12 to 20 percent of Americans age 65 and older who suffer from PAD, only one-third show outward signs of the disease. Symptoms can include pain when walking that subsides at rest, leg cramps, pain at rest, numbness and skin discoloration, sores or other symptoms of skin breakdown. Women may be more likely than men to have no symptoms and are less likely to have intermittent claudication, the cramp-like pains in the legs caused by poor circulation of blood to the leg muscles.

### The Test

Through early detection, interventional radiologists can save women from future stroke, heart attack and early death. The ankle-

### Vascular Disease Risk Factors for Women

- A family history of vascular disease—such as PAD, aneurysm, heart attack or stroke
- High cholesterol and/or high lipid blood test
- Diabetes
- Ever smoked or smoke now
- A personal history of high blood pressure, heart disease or other vascular disease

### Women should get tested if:

- Over age 65
- Over age 50 with a history of smoking
- Over age 50 with diabetes



**Peripheral arterial disease affects 10 million Americans, but early testing and intervention can help save lives.**

brachial index, a simple, painless test, compares blood pressure readings in the arm and ankle.

With early detection, women will be able to consult with an interventional radiologist when treatment is most effective and least invasive. Interventional radiologists are doctors who specialize in minimally invasive, targeted treatments performed using imaging for guidance. In many cases, PAD can be treated with medication and lifestyle changes such as smoking cessation, diet and a structured exercise program.

Women would be wise to get tested if they're over age 50 or have:

- A family history of vascular disease
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Ever smoked
- An inactive lifestyle
- High blood pressure, heart disease or other vascular disease
- Trouble walking
- Pain in the legs or feet.

### Learn More

For more information on interventional radiology, call (703) 691-1805 or visit [www.SIRweb.org](http://www.SIRweb.org).