

## **Fact Sheet**

**Contact: Emily Oehler  
703-460-5572**

### **Legs For Life<sup>®</sup> Free National Screening Program** *Interventional Radiologists Screen For Disabling and Life-Threatening Vascular Diseases*

Legs For Life is the largest, longest running and most inclusive national vascular disease screening program in the United States. The program has been held annually since 1998 in September, which is Vascular Disease Awareness Month. Interventional radiologists have screened nearly 322,000 people to date for a variety of vascular diseases: peripheral arterial disease, abdominal aortic aneurysm, carotid artery disease and venous disease. Legs For Life is a program of the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation. Collaborating organizations include the American Diabetes Association, the American Radiological Nurses Association, the American Heart Association's Council on Cardiovascular Radiology and Intervention, and the Society for Vascular Nursing.

The program was initially designed to screen patients for peripheral arterial disease (PAD), which is a red flag for several life-threatening vascular diseases, such as heart attack (the #1 cause of death in the United States), stroke (#3) and abdominal aortic aneurysms (#17).

Ten million Americans have PAD – clogged or narrowed arteries in the legs due to atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis is a gradual process in which cholesterol and scar tissue build up, forming a substance called plaque that clogs the arteries. This causes decreased blood flow in the legs and can result in pain when walking, and eventually gangrene and amputation. With more than 50 percent of PAD patients asymptomatic or with atypical symptoms, screening is essential for diagnosis and early treatment. Because atherosclerosis is a systemic disease, people with PAD are likely to develop blocked arteries in other areas of the body. Vascular diseases caused by atherosclerosis, commonly called “hardening of the arteries,” account for more deaths in the U.S. than any other cause.

The Legs For Life program has expanded to include screenings for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) and venous disease, as well as carotid artery disease which can lead to a stroke. Since 1998, more than 322,000 people have been screened for PAD. Screenings for AAA have been given to more than 58,000 people since 2000. More than 10,500 have been screened for venous disease since 2003. In 2004, screenings for carotid artery disease were made available and given to nearly 5,000 individuals.

#### **Program Facts**

- Nearly 400,000 free screenings provided (some participants are screened for multiple diseases)
- 3,825 sites have screened for PAD, AAA, carotid artery disease and/or venous disease
- One in four screened for PAD were at risk for developing the disease
- Interventional radiologists lead cardiologists, vascular surgeons, podiatrists, nurses, technologists, medical students and other health care providers during the screenings
- More than 3.6 million dollars has been distributed by the SIR Foundation to run this health initiative

*Local interviews, medical illustrations and broadcast quality video footage are available.  
More information can be found at [www.LegsForLife.org](http://www.LegsForLife.org) or [www.SIRweb.org](http://www.SIRweb.org).*