

**Media Alert**

*For Immediate Release*

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**Contact**

Maryann Verrillo, (703) 460-5572

Diane Shnitzler, (703) 460-5582

comm.@SIRweb.org

## **Free National Screenings Fight Heart Attack, Stroke, Amputation**

### ***Early Detection of Peripheral Arterial Disease (PAD) in September Recommended by Interventional Radiologists, Especially for African-Americans, Seniors, Diabetics***

**WHO:** Ten million Americans have peripheral arterial disease (PAD), and research shows that the highest risk populations include African-Americans (twice as likely to develop clogged leg arteries), seniors (12 to 20 percent of those 65 and older) and diabetics (one in three who are over the age of 50). Symptoms—such as leg pain while walking, numbness and tingling in the lower legs and feet, coldness in the lower legs and feet, or ulcers or sores on the legs or feet that don't heal—could be a warning sign of PAD. PAD develops mostly as a result of atherosclerosis, a condition that occurs when cholesterol and scar tissue build up, forming a substance called plaque, which narrows and clogs the arteries and slows blood flow to the legs. PAD is a red flag for several life-threatening diseases, such as heart attack (the number one killer in this country) and stroke. "Early detection and management of peripheral arterial disease, or PAD, can help prevent heart attack or stroke," said interventional radiologist Timothy P. Murphy, M.D., Legs for Life® chair. "Older men and women need to be examined with the ABI test that can diagnose PAD. Individuals need to know their ABI number the way they know their cholesterol, blood pressure or blood sugar number; it can save their lives," added Murphy.

**WHAT:** Free testing is available to screen those at risk and to raise public awareness of PAD. The ankle brachial index (ABI)—a simple and painless test—compares the blood pressure in the legs to the blood pressure in the arms to determine how well the blood is flowing and if additional tests are needed. More than 322,000 people have been screened to date through the Legs for Life® program, with one in four at risk for PAD. Select sites will also screen for abdominal aortic aneurysm, stroke and venous disease.

Legs for Life® began a decade ago because interventional radiologists—vascular experts who treat PAD—recognized that the disease is a major public health problem with a growing incidence, yet awareness among the general public and nonvascular health care providers is low. "The public at large—as well as the medical community—need to appreciate the importance of the diagnosis of PAD in terms of symptoms and avoiding amputation, but also importantly in how a diagnosis of PAD entails added risk of heart attack, stroke and death," said Legs for Life® chair Murphy.

**WHEN:** In September, during national PAD awareness month, interventional radiologists provide PAD screening nationwide through Legs for Life®, a program of the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation.

**WHY:** With more than 50 percent of PAD patients asymptomatic or with atypical symptoms, screening is essential for diagnosis. **Get tested if you**

- Have cramping in your leg when walking or exercising that is relieved by resting
- Are over age 50
- Have high cholesterol, a high lipid blood test or high blood pressure
- Have a family history of vascular disease, such as PAD, aneurysm, heart attack or stroke
- Have diabetes
- Smoke now or have ever smoked
- Are African-American
- Are overweight

**WHERE:** Nearly 100 screening locations are available across the country. To request a screening appointment—or to take a free PAD risk assessment quiz to review the results with your own doctor—visit [www.legsforlife.org](http://www.legsforlife.org). **Note:** Legs for Life® sites provide a limited number of screenings; advance

*appointments are required.* Many interventional radiologists also offer year-round screening by appointment; a link to this information is provided on the Legs for Life® site.

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### **About Legs for Life**

Legs for Life® has been held annually by the Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) Foundation since September 1998. It is the largest, longest running and most inclusive national vascular disease screening program in the United States. Nearly 322,000 people have been screened to date, with one in four found to be at risk for PAD. Select sites will also screen for abdominal aortic aneurysm, stroke risk and venous disease.

The Society of Interventional Radiology (SIR) is a founding partner of the PAD Coalition which, along with the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI), runs the national PAD awareness campaign in September called “Stay in Circulation: Take Steps to Learn About PAD.” Visit [www.legsforlife.org](http://www.legsforlife.org).

### **About the Society of Interventional Radiology Foundation**

SIR Foundation is a scientific foundation dedicated to fostering research and education in interventional radiology for the purposes of advancing scientific knowledge, increasing the number of skilled investigators in interventional radiology and developing innovative therapies that lead to improved patient care and quality of life.

Interventional radiologists are vascular experts who invented angioplasty and the catheter-delivered stent, which were first used in the legs to treat peripheral arterial disease. They provide vascular disease management and specialize in minimally invasive treatments. Visit [www.SIRfoundation.org](http://www.SIRfoundation.org).