



News Release

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Americans Say their Ability to Walk is “Priceless,” But are they Taking Steps to Preserve It?

*National Survey Released on Americans’ Walking Habits, Awareness
of Common Disease that Detrimentially Impacts Walking Ability*

FAIRFAX, Va., Sept. 19, 2001 – Nearly half of all Americans say their ability to walk is “priceless” while at the same time 1 in 5 say they can’t walk as far as they want to, most because of a physical disability or pain.

These are just two of the findings of a nationwide public opinion poll to kick-off Legs For Life®, a free screening program for peripheral vascular disease (PVD) that will be offered by more than 400 U.S. hospitals between Sept. 15 and Sept. 21. PVD is a common vascular condition that interferes with people’s ability to walk.

“Legs For Life strives to help keep Americans walking by identifying people at serious risk for PVD,” said Peter T. Beatty, M.D., chair of the Legs For Life® Committee of the Society of Cardiovascular & Interventional Radiology. “More than 10 million Americans suffer from PVD, and early detection is important because people who have it are at significantly increased risk of heart attack, stroke and life-threatening abdominal aneurysm.”

PVD is a potentially fatal disease that is caused by blocked blood flow in the arteries of the legs. About 40 percent of sufferers have no symptoms; for the remainder, PVD can cause pain, tingling, numbness or swelling in one or both legs, skin discoloration or pain during walking or exercise that stops with rest.

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The national consumer survey asked people to place a value on their ability to walk and asked for information on their ability and desire to walk. It also measured awareness of PVD and its symptoms and prevention. Highlights include:

- ✍ 49 percent of Americans said that their ability to walk is “priceless,” and another 20 percent provided a dollar value in excess of \$1 million (including 8 percent between \$1 million and \$5 million, and 7 percent at \$50 million or more). Interestingly, slightly more than 1 in 10 Americans (13 percent) gave a dollar value less than \$100.
- ✍ Nearly 1 in 5 Americans (18 percent) are unable to walk as far as they want to, most often due to a physical disability (42 percent) or pain (40 percent), such as the pain caused by arthritis or PVD.
- ✍ People aged 18 to 44 years who are unable to walk as far as they want to said that the cause is pain 41 percent of the time and incapacity 29 percent of the time. Americans age 45 and older said that it is incapacity 46 percent of the time, and pain 38 percent of the time.
- ✍ While 1 in 10 Americans said they would only walk the shortest distance in good weather on an average day – about the length of a driveway – 4 in 10 (41 percent) would walk 2 miles or more.
- ✍ 1 in 4 (25 percent) Americans over age 65 said that they would only walk the length of a driveway on an average day, but nearly as many (22 percent) in the same age group said that they would walk 2 miles or more.
- ✍ According to the Legs For Life survey, nearly two-thirds (65 percent) of all Americans are aware of PVD, which was once commonly referred to as hardening of the arteries. Awareness of the disease is even higher – 72 percent and up – among individuals over age 45, regardless of income or education level.

“We’re very pleased that people are beginning to recognize PVD, since this is the first step in learning how to prevent it,” Dr. Beatty said. “But there’s still a lot of work to be done – 1 out of 2 Americans cannot name even one symptom of PVD, and nearly one-third don’t know what causes it.”

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While PVD is most often diagnosed in individuals over age 50, preventive measures such as eating a healthy diet and exercising are important at every age since the disease tends to worsen over time. Individuals who smoke, or have diabetes, high blood pressure or elevated cholesterol levels are at increased risk.

Many people who are at risk of PVD also are at risk of abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA), the 13th leading cause of death in this country. Most Legs For Life screening sites will be providing information about AAA, and some will screen for it in addition to PVD.

AAA is caused by a weakened area in the main vessel that supplies blood from the heart to the rest of the body. The weak area bulges like a balloon and can burst, causing instant death.

The Legs For Life survey was conducted by Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, N.J., on behalf of the Society of Cardiovascular & Interventional Radiology (SCVIR). Results are subject to a sampling variation of plus or minus 3 percent.

Legs For Life was developed in 1997 by SCVIR as a public health campaign that identifies people at risk for PVD and refers them to their personal physicians for further evaluation. SCVIR is a professional association of interventional radiologists, physicians who treat PVD and other diseases through minimally invasive procedures that are often alternatives to open surgery.

Legs For Life is endorsed by the Cardiovascular Radiology Council of the American Heart Association, the American Radiological Nurses Association and the Society for Vascular Nursing.

To locate a Legs For Life® screening or request an educational brochure on PVD or AAA, consumers can visit www.legsforlife.org, or call a toll-free consumer information line, 1-877-357-2847. Screenings are free, but an advance appointment is necessary at the majority of sites.