

Five Most Important Things Baby Boomers can do to Maintain Good Vascular Health

Your vascular health is a matter of life and limb.

Baby boomers need to understand how to maintain a healthy vascular system as they become seniors. By 2015, the U.S. Census reports an expected 87 million people aged 55 and older, up from 67 million in 2005. Since vascular disease primarily affects seniors, the number of vascular disease cases is expected to rise dramatically.

The vascular system is made up of arteries and veins that carry oxygen-rich blood throughout the body to vital organs, the brain, and legs. As we age, our arteries tend to thicken with a build-up of plaque and cholesterol, get stiffer, and narrow. When blood flow is restricted, vascular diseases like carotid artery disease can lead to stroke; peripheral arterial disease can lead to problems walking and in the most advanced cases, foot ulcers, gangrene and possible amputation; and abdominal aortic aneurysm can result in death if not treated early.

The following five practices are not new, but with so many people reaching senior status, it is important to remember the positive impact they can have on their vascular health:

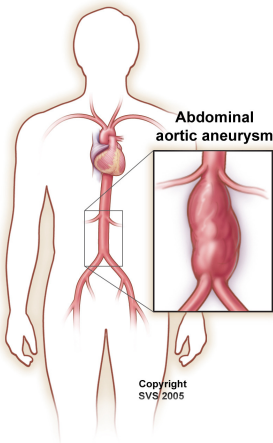
1. Stop smoking
2. Eat a healthy, low fat diet
3. Maintain good cholesterol levels
4. Take care of their blood pressure to keep it in a normal range
5. Exercise regularly – even a moderate walking program can be effective

People aged 55 and older should talk with their primary care physician about their vascular health. Painless, noninvasive tests can determine if there are blockages in a patient's neck or leg arteries or if there is aneurysm formation in the aorta. (Include information about a screening event if you are presenting one.) If there is an indication of a blockage, patients should seek treatment immediately. Vascular disease can be controlled if diagnosed and treated early. Vascular surgeons treat these diseases with lifestyle changes, medical management, minimally invasive endovascular angioplasty and stent procedures, and open bypass surgery.

To learn more about your vascular health and vascular diseases, visit www.phillyveins.com , or call 610-933-2444 for free brochures.

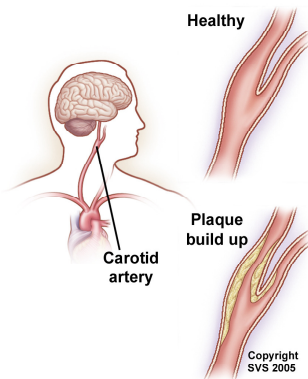
Three Most Prominent Vascular Diseases

Most Americans are familiar with heart disease and with the consequences of blockages in the vessels that carry blood to and from the heart. But few people realize that blockages caused by a buildup of plaque and cholesterol affect more than coronary arteries. Arteries and veins carry oxygen-rich blood to vital organs, the brain, and legs. Blockages cause serious illness. Three of the most recognized vascular diseases include:



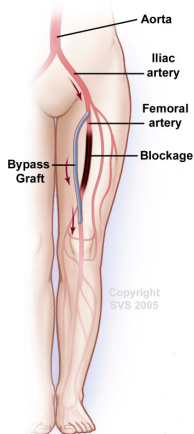
Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) is an enlargement or “bulge” that develops in a weakened area within the largest artery in the abdomen. The pressure generated by each heartbeat pushes against the weakened aortic wall, causing the aneurysm to enlarge. If the AAA remains undetected, the aortic wall continues to weaken, and the aneurysm continues to grow. Eventually, the aneurysm becomes so large, and its wall so weak, that rupture occurs. When this happens there is massive internal bleeding, a situation that is usually fatal. The only way to break this cycle is to find the AAA before it ruptures.



Carotid Artery Disease - Stroke

Carotid arteries occur when the main blood vessels to the brain develop a buildup of plaque caused by atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries. When the buildup becomes very severe, it can cause a stroke. A stroke occurs when part of the brain is damaged by these vascular problems; in fact, 80 percent of strokes are “ischemic strokes” where part of the circulation to the brain is cut off, usually due to blockages in the carotid arteries. The process is similar to the buildup of plaque in arteries in the heart that causes heart attacks. Strokes are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. according to the National Center for Health Statistics.



Peripheral Arterial Disease

Peripheral arterial disease (PAD) occurs when atherosclerosis, or hardening of the arteries, causes a buildup of plaque in the blood vessels that carry oxygen and nutrients to all the tissues of the body. As these plaques worsen, they reduce essential blood flow to the limbs and can even cause complete blockages of the arteries. Early on, PAD may only cause difficulty walking, but in its most severe forms, it can cause painful foot ulcers, infections, and even gangrene, which could require amputation. People with PAD are three times more likely to die of heart attacks or strokes than those without PAD.

Provided by the Society of Vascular Surgery