ROSEMONT, Ill., Jan. 20, 2019 – Exercise is known to benefit just about any part of the body, including veins and arteries. A new study from researchers in the United Kingdom showed that first-time marathon runners reduced their “vascular age” by almost four years, reducing blood pressure and aortic stiffness and also resulting in a reduced risk of heart attack and stroke.
“Vascular age” is a measure of the age of the arteries and involves arteries both large and small. Diagnosis of vascular age centers around measuring arterial stiffness. If vascular age is assessed as greater than chronological age, someone may be more at risk of developing vascular disease later in life. Causes of vascular aging include sedentary lifestyle, poor diet, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, smoking, high and low cholesterol levels and family history of cardiovascular disease. Most factors are modifiable.

Following a diagnosis of vascular disease, physical activity can keep complications at bay and impact both the diseases and vascular age.

While not everyone can prepare for and run a marathon, daily exercise has been found to significantly improve vascular health. The Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) and SVS Foundation have developed and made available a physical activity and health flyer to demonstrate the types of physical activity that can aid in improving vascular health. The Society also recommends nutrition tips and diet for better vascular health.

To add physical activity into your daily schedule:

- Start by selecting enjoyable activities
- Work out with a friend
- Encourage family members to participate
- Measure progress through a daily exercise journal
- For those ages 18 to 64, incorporate up to 150 minutes of exercise a week as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including moderate intensity aerobic activities such as brisk walking and strength training exercises such as yoga
- Talk to your doctor about the right exercise program for you

With veins and arteries running throughout the body, vascular disease can include vein disorders in the legs, poor circulation in the feet, abdominal aortic ruptures and renal or carotid problems. The most common issue is hardening or thickening of the arteries (arteriosclerosis), which causes stroke, heart attack, peripheral arterial disease and many other circulatory problems.

Vascular surgeons are specialists who can treat these diseases and conditions of the circulatory system.

The original study was published in the January Journal of the American College of Cardiology. For more information on vascular health topics, including exercise and diet for vascular health visit www.vascular.org.

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