



Highway to Health Member Toolkit

This toolkit includes information about the Highway to Health campaign for you to use on your personal social media channels, in the external and internal speaking engagements you have, and share with staff, executives, colleagues, and peers.

What's Inside

PAGE 1 Fact Sheet & FAQ	PAGE 6 Template Press Release	PAGE 7 Template Social Media	PAGE 9 Template Newsletter/ Web Copy	PAGE 10 C-Suite Letter	PAGE 11 Media Training/ Tips	PAGE 12 Social Media Do's & Don'ts	PAGE 13 Graphics/ Media Library
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Introduction

As you are keenly aware, millions of Americans are at risk for developing vascular diseases. Yet, awareness of the specialty with the most comprehensive training for the treatment of vascular diseases – vascular surgeons – remains low.



The Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) aims to educate and raise awareness about the symptoms and risk factors associated with vascular disease, as most underestimate their risk, leaving them vulnerable to serious health consequences, including heart attack, stroke, amputation, and even death. At the same time, SVS is raising awareness around the critical role vascular surgeons play in a comprehensive care team.

For the first time, SVS is launching a consumer public relations campaign – **Highway to Health: Fast Track Your Vessel Health** – to empower Americans to learn their SVS Strong Vessel Score, start a conversation with their doctor, and ask if a vascular surgeon could be a good addition to their overall care team.

The success of this campaign, in part, depends on your willingness to champion the message. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to the SVS Communications team at SVSPress@vascularsociety.org.

Table of Contents

Fact Sheet & FAQ

To be used to provide background information internally and externally

Template Press Release

To be shared on your institution's webpage to announce the campaign

Template Social Media Posts

To be shared on Facebook, LinkedIn, and/or X to tap into your networks

Template Newsletter/Web Copy

To be shared on your institution's webpages and/or via email

C-Suite Letter

To be shared with institution c-suite members to encourage implementation and participation

Media Training/Tips

To be used for media inquiries and interview requests

Social Media Do's and Don'ts

To be used to implement best practices on personal social media accounts

Graphic/Media Library

To be used in conjunction with the above materials

Campaign Fact Sheet

Fast Track Your Vessel Health









As one of the largest organ systems, the vascular system is like a network of highways, with blood vessels (veins, arteries, and capillaries) delivering oxygen and moving blood to every part of the body.

Vascular conditions can affect the flow of blood throughout your body. When blood vessels become diseased and damaged, the blood flow becomes inadequate. This affects the ability of various parts of your body to function normally.

If left **untreated**, vascular conditions can lead to **serious health consequences** including heart attack, stroke, amputation, and even death.

What are the signs and symptoms?

This can be easily minimized as “just a part of getting older,” but they cannot be ignored.

-  Stroke
-  Pain, swelling, or discoloration in the legs, arms, and feet
-  Sudden, severe pain in the stomach or lower back
-  Leg cramps
-  Hair loss on lower part of leg
-  Difficulty walking
-  Cold or numb toes
-  No symptoms



If you have signs, symptoms, and risk factors or just have questions about your vascular health, **it is a great idea to speak with a vascular surgeon.**

Why Visit a Vascular Surgeon?

Vascular surgeons take care of the superhighway that is your vascular system, ensuring that your blood vessels flow smoothly and blocked or broken blood vessels are repaired or reconstructed.




While vascular surgeons perform surgery, they see and treat many patients who don't require surgery. A significant amount of the care they provide is dedicated to prevention, screening, and medication management. They treat a wide range of vascular diseases, aiming to improve blood flow, reduce symptoms, and prevent serious complications, like preserving limbs.

Campaign Fact Sheet

Learning Your SVS Strong Vessel Score

Maintaining vascular health at every age is critical to living longer and, in better health, doing the activities you enjoy. Your SVS Strong Vessel Score encompasses a checklist of potential risk factors for vascular disease for you to share with your doctor to start the conversation about vascular health.

Click the circle that aligns with how many risk factors you may have.

-  No Risk Factors
-  Some Risk Factors
-  Many Risk Factors

Risk factors of vascular conditions:

- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- 65 years old or more
- High blood pressure
- Family history of vascular disease
- Use or have a history of using tobacco products

Ways to improve your SVS Strong Vessel Score:

- Exercise regularly
- Control blood pressure
- Eat a heart-healthy diet
- Manage cholesterol levels
- Connect with a vascular surgeon
- If diabetic, keep your hemoglobin A1c < 6.5
- Stop smoking

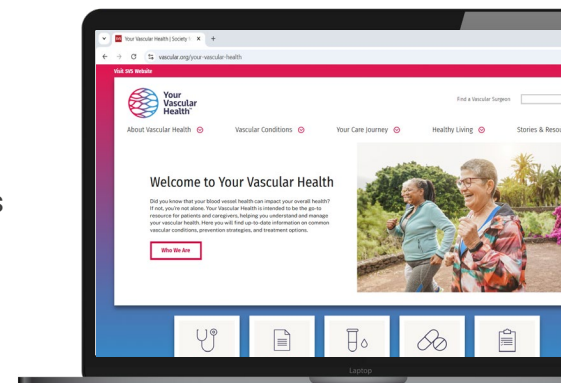


Don't ignore these symptoms or warning signs. Ask your primary care doctor about seeing a **vascular surgeon** – the only type of doctor who is an expert at taking care of blood vessels.

Highway to Health: Fast Track Your Vessel Health

The Society for Vascular Surgery is launching a three-year education campaign, Highway to Health, to empower Americans to learn their SVS Strong Vessel Score and start a conversation with their doctor to see if a vascular surgeon could be a good addition to their overall care team.

Visit yourvascularhealth.org to learn more.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are intended to be general in nature. They have been designed to help audiences learn more about the importance of vascular health.

1. What is vascular health?

As one of the largest organ systems, the vascular system is like a network of highways, with blood vessels (veins, arteries, and capillaries) delivering oxygen and moving blood to every part of the body.

Vascular conditions can affect the flow of blood throughout your body. When blood vessels become diseased and damaged, the blood flow becomes inadequate. This affects the ability of various parts of your body to function normally. Vascular conditions can lead to serious health consequences including heart attack, stroke, amputation, and even death.

Maintaining vascular health at every age is critical to living longer and, in better health, doing the activities you enjoy.

2. What are some common vascular diseases?

Nearly **one in three Americans** have not heard of any of the most common vascular diseases, which include:



Peripheral artery disease (PAD)

A chronic condition where plaque builds up in the arteries that carry blood to your legs, gradually narrowing the arteries. If left untreated, PAD can lead to serious complications, including difficulty walking, amputation and death.



Deep vein thrombosis (DVT)

When a blood clot forms in a deep vein, usually in the legs, it can partially or completely block blood flow. If a piece of the clot breaks off, it can travel to your lungs and make it hard to breathe or cause death.



Carotid artery disease (CAD)

Results from the carotid arteries becoming narrow or obstructed, which can lead to strokes, "mini-strokes", and possibly dementia.



Varicose veins

Swollen, blue, bulging, ugly veins that appear under the skin on your leg. They can cause leg pain, heaviness, and swelling. Some people will suffer blood clots and even skin damage that leads to open sores.



Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)

When the aorta wall weakens over time and begins to bulge like a balloon. If left untreated, an AAA may get bigger and eventually rupture, causing severe internal bleeding and often death.

3. What are the signs and symptoms?

Vascular disease can be silent and deadly.

Signs and symptoms can go unnoticed or unrecognized and cause serious or life-threatening complications if left untreated. Some warning signs can be easily ignored or minimized as “just a part of getting older.”

Some of the signs & symptoms include:



Stroke



Pain, swelling, or discoloration in the legs, arms, and feet



Sudden, severe pain in the stomach or lower back



Leg cramps



Hair loss on lower part of leg



Difficulty walking



Cold or numb toes



No symptoms

4. Who is at highest risk for vascular disease?

Learning your SVS Strong Vessel Score can help you understand risk factors for common vascular diseases, including:

Diabetes

High cholesterol

65 years old or more

High blood pressure

Family history of vascular disease

Use or have a history of using tobacco products

Click the circle that aligns with how many risk factors you may have.



No Risk Factors



Some Risk Factors



Many Risk Factors

5. What can I do to prevent or manage vascular disease?

Preventing and managing vascular disease begins with educating yourself and loved ones on the **signs, symptoms, and risk factors**.

Ask your primary care doctor about seeing a **vascular surgeon** – the specialty with the **most comprehensive training** for the treatment of vascular diseases.

6. Who are vascular surgeons?

Vascular surgeons take care of the superhighway that is your vascular system, ensuring that your blood vessels flow smoothly and blocked or broken vessels are repaired or reconstructed.

They treat a wide range of vascular diseases, aiming to improve blood flow, reduce symptoms, and prevent serious complications, like preserving limbs.



While vascular surgeons perform surgery, they see and treat many patients who don't require surgery.

7. How does a vascular surgeon differ from other specialties?

There are several different types of specialists treating vascular disease. However, vascular surgeons are the specialty with the most comprehensive training for the treatment of vascular diseases.

8. Why should someone see a vascular surgeon?

Surgery is only part of the story for vascular surgeons – a significant amount of the care they provide is dedicated to prevention, screening, and medication management. If you have signs, symptoms, risk factors or just have questions about your vascular health, it is a great idea to speak with a vascular surgeon.

9. What is the Society for Vascular Surgery?

The Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) seeks to advance excellence and innovation in vascular health through education, advocacy, research, and public awareness. The organization was founded in 1946 and currently has a membership of more than 6,300. SVS membership is recognized in the vascular community as a mark of professional achievement.

SVS | Society for
Vascular Surgery

Template Press Release

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[INSERT INSTITUTION NAME OR PHYSICIAN NAME] JOINS HIGHWAY TO HEALTH CAMPAIGN TO INCREASE AWARENESS ABOUT COMMON BLOOD VESSEL DISEASES AFFECTING MORE THAN 40 MILLION AMERICANS

New survey reveals nearly one in three Americans at highest risk for vascular diseases and life-threatening complications report low awareness

[DATELINE] – Today, **[insert institution name or physician name]** announced **[its/her/his]** participation in the Highway to Health campaign, a three-year patient education campaign developed by the Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) to raise awareness about the symptoms and risk factors associated with vascular disease. According to a new national survey, nearly one in three Americans have not heard of any of the most common vascular diseases, like peripheral artery disease and carotid artery disease. Beyond not knowing about vascular disease, most underestimate their risk for these conditions, leaving them vulnerable to serious health consequences including heart attack, stroke, amputation, and even death.

Vascular conditions can slow the circulation of blood throughout your body. When blood vessels become blocked, it can create “traffic jams” that slow or stop blood flow, impacting the way the body functions. Vascular disease is silent and deadly; signs and symptoms of vascular disease can go unnoticed or unrecognized and cause serious or life-threatening complications if left untreated.

The top risk factors for vascular disease include having diabetes, use or history of tobacco products, high cholesterol, and high blood pressure. **[Insert Institution or physician name]** encourages people to learn their risk using the campaign’s SVS Strong Vessel Score checklist and start a conversation with their doctor to see if a vascular surgeon could be a good addition to their overall care team.

This campaign comes at a time when by 2030 more than 100 million people in the U.S. will be reaching an age associated with a high risk of vascular diseases, meaning more people than ever before may require care from a specialist. Unfortunately, more than half of Americans don’t recognize vascular surgeons as the specialists who prevent and treat vascular diseases – despite vascular surgeons being the experts in this area. Vascular surgeons are the long-term primary care providers for vascular health and patients with vascular conditions, managing blood vessels in every part of the body except the brain and the heart.

“Many people don’t realize the impact that vascular surgeons have on our healthcare system. They are the only specialty 100% educated, trained, tested, and certified singularly on vascular health. That is why we are proud to support the Highway to Health campaign and their efforts to help empower clinicians and patients to start the conversation about vascular health,” said **[Insert Institution spokesperson]**. “Vascular teams across the country are dedicated to helping patients achieve better vascular health and manage chronic conditions that can impact blood flow, from diabetes to high blood pressure – aiming to improve a patient’s quality of life.”

The Highway to Health campaign empowers people to learn about the best ways to maximize vascular health at every age, look for the early warning signs of common vascular conditions, and ask if a vascular surgeon is right for them. To increase awareness of vascular health and vascular disease prevention, SVS released the Highway to Health patient education toolkit which includes videos, checklists, and interactive elements and can be found at YourVascularHealth.org.

For more information, visit yourvascularhealth.org

About **[insert institution name]:**
[insert institution boilerplate]

Media Contact:
[insert contact information]

Template Social Media



The following template posts can be customized for different social media platforms and tailored to fit your voice.



#DYK Nearly one in three Americans haven't heard of common vascular diseases such as peripheral artery disease, carotid artery disease, and abdominal aortic aneurysm?

It's imperative that we raise awareness and educate others about the importance of vascular health through the Highway to Health campaign as the country looks to brace for an influx of more than 100 million Americans reaching an age associated with a high risk of vascular diseases. Learn more about the patient education toolkit, which includes videos, checklists, and interactive elements, and campaign at yourvascularhealth.org

#HighwaytoHealth #FastTrackYourVesselHealth

[Download Graphic](#)

Honored to join the Highway to Health campaign with @Society for Vascular Surgery. Check out our patient toolkit for insights on vascular health, symptoms, & the Strong Vessel Score checklist: yourvascularhealth.org.

#HighwaytoHealth #FastTrackYourVesselHealth

[Download Graphic](#)





Vascular disease can often be silent and deadly. Signs and symptoms may go unnoticed or unrecognized, leading to serious or life-threatening complications if left untreated. Many warning signs can be easily dismissed as “just part of getting older.”

That’s why it’s important to learn your SVS Strong Vessel Score by understanding the top risks for vascular disease: age over 65, high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol, and a history of smoking.

Learn more about the Highway to Health campaign: yourvascularhealth.org

#HighwaytoHealth #FastTrackYourVesselHealth

[Download Graphic](#)

More than 100 million people in the U.S. are reaching an age associated with a high risk of vascular diseases. This means that more people than ever may not receive the specialized care they need.

I’m proud to be a part of the Highway to Health campaign, developed by @Society for Vascular Surgery to increase awareness of vascular diseases.

Learn more from our patient education toolkit which includes videos, checklists and interactive elements and can be found at YourVascularHealth.org.

#HighwaytoHealth #FastTrackYourVesselHealth
#VascularHealth #HealthAwareness

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When posting:

Please note that some character counts may need to be adjusted to meet content limitations specific to each platform.

Template Newsletter/ Web Copy

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[Institution or Physician Name] Joins Highway to Health Campaign to Encourage Americans to Fast Track Their Vessel Health

A new national survey from the Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS) found that nearly one in three Americans at the highest risk for developing blood vessel (vascular) diseases have not heard of any of the most common conditions, like peripheral artery disease and carotid artery disease. If left untreated, these diseases place people at high risk for life-threatening complications. That is why SVS is encouraging physicians across specialties to join together to educate and raise awareness about the symptoms and risk factors associated with vascular disease through the Highway to Health campaign.

Understanding Blood Vessel (Vascular) Diseases

As one of the largest organ systems, the vascular system is like a network of highways, with blood vessels (veins, arteries, and capillaries) delivering oxygen and moving blood to every part of the body. Vascular conditions can slow circulation and impact the way the body functions. Signs and symptoms of vascular disease (such as pain or swelling in the legs, arms, and feet) can go unnoticed or unrecognized and cause serious or life-threatening complications if left untreated including heart attack, stroke, amputation, and even death.

A Gap in Awareness

Many people are familiar with heart doctors or brain surgeons, but more than 80% are not familiar with the specialty with the most comprehensive training for the treatment of vascular diseases – vascular surgeons. Vascular surgeons do more than just surgery. Vascular surgeons address the full spectrum of vascular disease, from prevention and screening to both minimally invasive and surgical treatments.

To help address this gap in awareness, SVS is launching a three-year patient education campaign, Highway to Health campaign, to empower Americans to learn their SVS Strong Vessel Score and start a conversation with their doctor to see if a vascular surgeon could be a good addition to their overall care team. SVS also released the Highway to Health patient education toolkit which includes videos, checklists, and interactive elements and can be found at YourVascularHealth.org.

Talk to Your Doctor

Maintaining vascular health at every age supports overall health, quality of life, and longevity, yet more than 70% of doctors haven't talked to their patients over the age of 50 about their risk for vascular disease, or their Strong Vessel Score. Risk factors for vascular disease include having diabetes, use or history of tobacco products, high cholesterol, and/or high blood pressure. The SVS Strong Vessel Score offers patients a way to share information with their doctor about risk factors and family history to help benchmark and start a conversation about their vascular health.

Problems with blood circulation are not rare, but they are not always obvious. We urge people to get checked out when in doubt and ask their doctor if seeing a vascular surgeon is right for them.

For more information, visit yourvascularhealth.org.

C-Suite Letter

[Download Template](#)

Dear [insert name],

As a member of the Society for Vascular Surgery (SVS), I am writing to share alarming new data that shows despite the vascular system being one of the largest systems in the body, nearly two-thirds of Americans have not talked with a healthcare provider about their risk of vascular disease. This number increases to 71% among those aged 50 or older, who are at higher risk for vascular conditions.

This gap in care is especially concerning as all Baby Boomers will be age 65 or older by 2030 – meaning more people than ever before will be facing vascular diseases and their deadly complications. The rise in diabetes, obesity and other co-morbidities will only heighten the risks of stroke, limb loss and aneurysm mortality and our health care system has not been effective in providing education and risk factor modification for our communities.

Addressing vascular health, patient safety, and quality care will always be at the forefront of [Insert name of institution]. The work we do within our respective roles to improve our community, especially regarding challenges like the low public awareness of vascular disease and vascular surgeons is critical. Unfortunately, 54% of Americans don't recognize vascular surgeons as the specialists who prevent and treat vascular diseases, and at least 65% of Americans at the highest risk for developing dangerous blood vessel diseases report having low awareness.

These statistics may seem startling, but I believe that together we have an opportunity to make a positive impact. To address this gap, SVS is launching a three-year patient education campaign, Highway to Health, to empower Americans to learn their SVS Strong Vessel Score and start a conversation with their doctor to see if a vascular surgeon could be a good and needed addition to their overall care team.

Vascular surgeons are uniquely positioned as the specialty with the most comprehensive training for the treatment of vascular disease, and with your support, we can help increase awareness and life-saving care at the individual patient and community levels.

I encourage you and the team at [Insert name of institution] to participate in the Highway to Health campaign and become a leader in the [Insert name of locality] area for vascular health.

I would be happy to discuss this campaign further and provide any further information you need to help move this initiative forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,

[insert name]

Media Training Tips

The following are media training best practices and tips for effectively communicating with the media whether it's in the form of a video interview, email Q&A, or an informal conversation with a reporter.

Know Your Key Messages

- Identify 2-3 key points you want to convey and ensure they align with the campaign.
- Practice delivering these points in a clear and concise manner.
- No matter how the conversation shifts, find ways to bring it back to your core message.
- If faced with a difficult or confrontational question, avoid getting flustered and steer the conversation back to your key points.

Be Prepared and Practice

- Research the outlet, journalist, or interviewer to understand their style and audience.
- Anticipate potential questions and prepare thoughtful responses.

Speak Clearly and Confidently

- Slow down, enunciate, and avoid filler words like “um” or “like”.
- Keep your language simple and accessible. Avoid using technical terms or industry jargon unless your audience is highly specialized. Make sure your message can be understood by a patient audience.
- Use a warm, positive tone to engage the audience.

Look Interested and Engaged

- Avoid crossing your arms or fidgeting, as these can come across as defensive or nervous.
- Dress in a professional way that showcases your brand and sets the tone of the interview.
- Create a clean and professional background for online interviews, not distracting to the interviewer or audience.

Handling Difficult Questions



Flagging: This technique draws attention to what you are about to say.

- “What I hear most from my patients is...”
- “If people remember nothing else, people should...”



Bridging: Helps move from one issue to another, and bridge the focus back to your key messages.

- “I don't know the answer to that question. But what I do know is...”
- “Historically, that was the case. But today, here's what we're doing...”



Blocking: If a reporter persists with questions you can't answer, defer him or her to your society's PR team for more information.

Social Media Do's and Don'ts

This social media guide includes best practices for creating original content and do's and don'ts for sharing content on social media platforms.

Audience

- Understand your audience and know who you're addressing.
- Focus on communicating in a way that resonates with your audience, being both educational and informative.
 - Ask, "Will my audience find this content valuable or relevant?"
 - Engage with your audience. Encourage interaction by asking questions related to your content or by inviting followers to share their thoughts and experiences.

Language

- Keep your message concise and include a clear call to action.
- Start strong with a compelling first sentence. It can grab attention – use questions or intriguing statements to draw followers in.
- Avoid adding unnecessary details. With short attention spans on social media, capturing your audience's interest quickly is key.

Content

- Include a call to action in social media posts. Encourage followers to take specific actions, like visiting your website, sharing the post, or leaving a comment.
- Use hashtags. Use two or three relevant hashtags to increase visibility. Examples of campaign-relevant hashtags include:
 - #HighwaytoHealth #FastTrackYourVesselHealth #SVS
- Use images, videos, and graphics to increase engagement. Ensure that visuals are high-quality and relevant to the content of your post.
- Be aware of social media platform restrictions related to content, character count, images, etc. For example:
 - X limits the number of characters with spaces to 280 per post.
 - Instagram limits the number of images/videos to 20 per post.
 - Facebook limits the number of characters to 1,500 per post, but only the first 100 words are visible.
 - LinkedIn limits the number of characters to 3,000 per post.

Strategies to Avoid

- Avoid overposting. Posting too frequently (i.e., every day) can overwhelm your audience.
- When encountering negative feedback, take the time to craft a thoughtful and strategic response, or don't respond at all, rather than reacting too quickly. Consider the best approach to address the concerns.
- Limit hashtag use. Overloading your posts with hashtags can drown out the content and decrease engagement.

