

# A Magnificent System

## Question: How many miles of blood vessels do you have in your body?

Between arteries, capillaries and veins, you have more than 60,000 miles of blood vessels.

Arteries carry blood away from the heart and pass oxygen and nutrients to tissue cells through small, thin blood vessels called capillaries. After the cells have used up the oxygen and nutrients, carbon dioxide and waste products leave the tissue through capillaries. Blood flows to the veins, which carry oxygen-poor blood back to the heart and lungs.

The process repeats itself for as long as we live.

It's a magnificent system, but one that too many people damage with bad lifestyle choices such as smoking and fat-laden diets. Dr. Milton Conley, a well-recognized vascular surgeon at Oroville Hospital, sees the ill effects every day.

"Smoking affects the whole vascular system," Dr. Conley says. "It's what we call a systemic disease. Other risk factors are diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol, all of which contribute to atherosclerosis."

Block the arteries that carry blood to the brain, and there is a risk of stroke. Block the arteries that go to

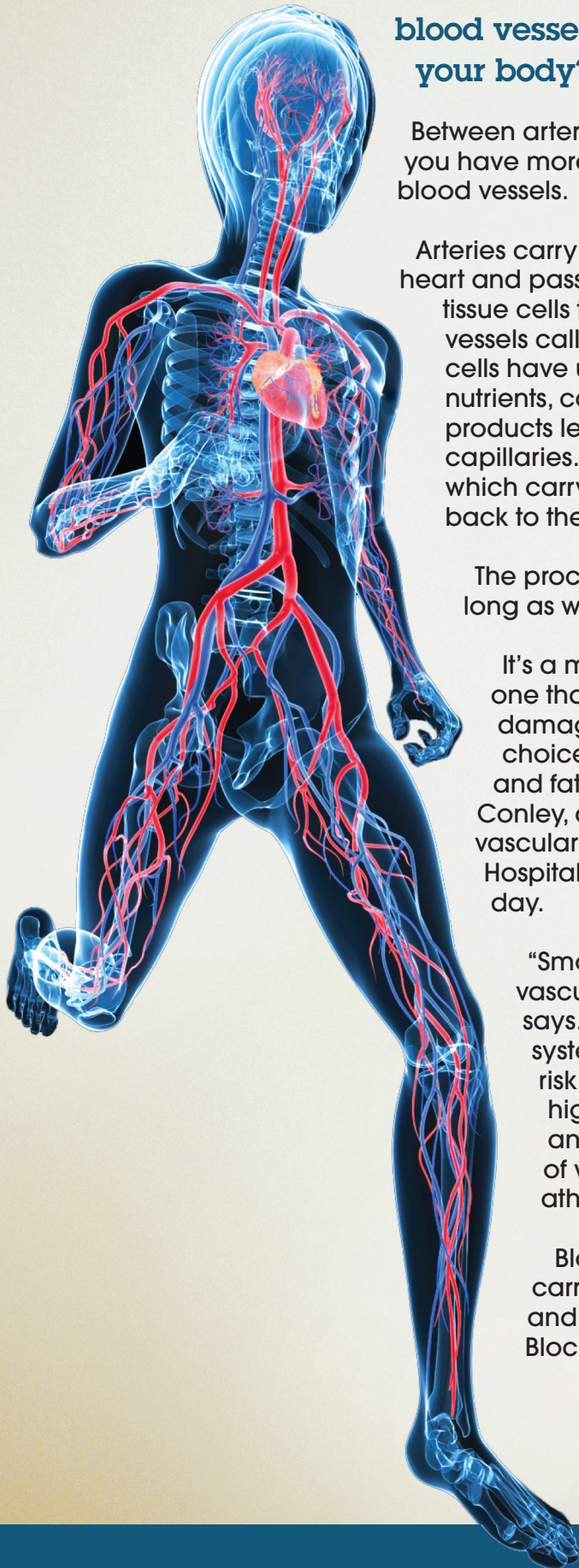
the heart, and there is the risk of heart attack. Block arteries in a leg, and there can be pain and a reduced ability to walk, which can ultimately lead to amputation.

Of course, not all vascular disease is the result of lifestyle choices; family history and environmental factors can also play a role.

Other vascular diseases include aneurysm (an abnormal bulge in the wall of a blood vessel), venous blood clots, and varicose veins. Varicose veins occur most commonly in the legs and can be very painful, especially when standing or walking.

Oroville Hospital offers many advanced treatment options, and Dr. Conley is especially qualified to perform them. If he had his way, though, he'd have fewer patients requiring surgery.

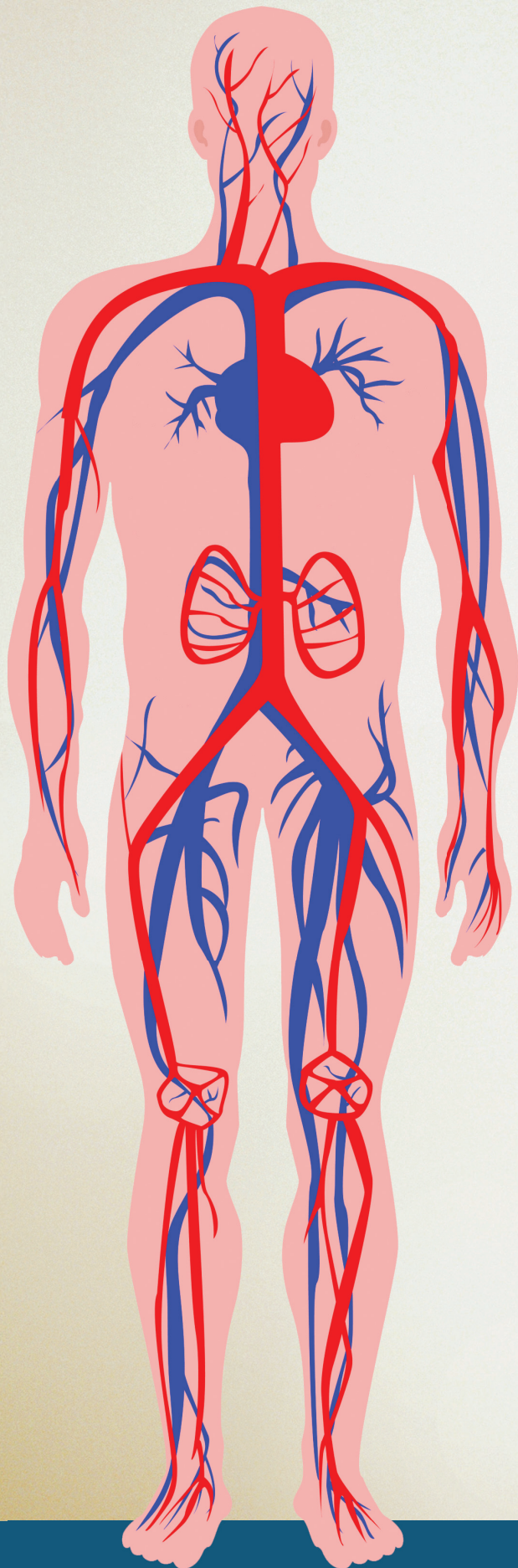
"There are four main risk factors that can be controlled or eliminated: Smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol." Dr. Conley says. "The patient's responsibility would be to stop smoking, follow a healthy diet and exercise. The physician's responsibility is to oversee this, and in the appropriate instances prescribe medications or recommend surgery to further control and treat these problems."



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In addition, blockages in the renal (kidney) arteries can cause stenosis, which can lead to uncontrolled high blood pressure, abnormal kidney function and even congestive heart failure.

Other vascular diseases include aneurysm (an abnormal bulge in the wall of a blood vessel), venous blood clots, and varicose veins.

Although commonly associated with the legs, they can occur anywhere—and can be very painful, especially when standing or walking. Since they can lead to serious complications, the presence of varicose veins shouldn't be taken lightly.

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