

# Your Vascular System



## The vascular system includes:

- **Red arteries** that carry oxygen-rich blood away from the heart;
- **Blue veins** that carry oxygen-poor blood back to the heart.

Blood exits the left side of the heart and travels through the body. It enters small blood vessels delivering nutrients while collecting waste products and carbon dioxide.

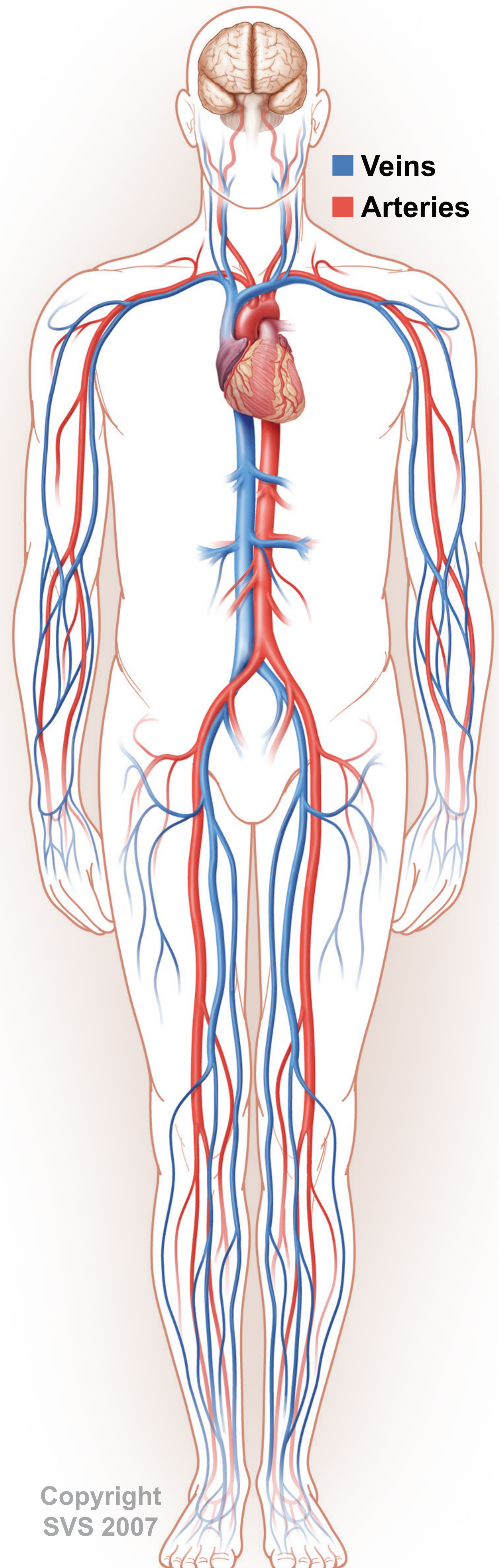
Then, blood travels in veins passing through the kidneys and liver delivering waste products. Eventually, blood returns to the right side of the heart ready to repeat the process.



## Over time, changes often occur within the human body.

- The aging process tends to thicken, stiffen, and narrow arteries. This is known as arteriosclerosis.
- Plaque and cholesterol builds up within large and medium sized arteries (atherosclerosis).
- Narrowed blood vessels that lead to the brain can result in carotid artery disease. This condition can lead to a stroke.
- An aneurysm is the progressive weakening of a blood vessel wall. If not diagnosed and treated, an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) can rupture. AAAs account for approximately 15,000 deaths in the United States annually.
- Narrowed arteries in the legs, known as peripheral arterial disease (PAD), can lead to sores, pain when walking, or even amputation.

**Vascular surgeons can monitor these conditions. They will often recommend diet modifications, exercise, or prescription medications for vascular conditions. If necessary, vascular surgeons can place stents and perform angioplasties, and bypass surgery.**



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