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Climb Stairs to Lower Blood Pressure and Strengthen Leg Muscles

New study demonstrates effectiveness of stair climbing in helping to prevent and treat menopause and age-related vascular complications and muscle weakness

CLEVELAND, Ohio (February 14, 2018)—If you don't have the time or money for aerobic and resistance training, why not try climbing the stairs? A new study demonstrates that stair climbing not only lowers blood pressure but also builds leg strength, especially in postmenopausal women with estrogen deficiencies who are more susceptible to vascular and muscle problems. The study results are published online today in *Menopause*, the journal of The North American Menopause Society (NAMS).

Few people would argue that exercise is good for you. But for postmenopausal women, identifying the right form of exercise to achieve the desired benefits without creating additional health problems is more complicated. High-intensity resistance training, for example, is an effective intervention for reducing age-related loss of muscle strength in postmenopausal women. However, it also has the potential to increase blood pressure in middle-aged adults with prehypertension or hypertension. These negative effects have been minimized by combining aerobic and resistance training, but there are barriers that prevent many women from taking advantage of the benefits. These real and perceived barriers include lack of time, money, nearby fitness facilities, poor weather, and a sense of embarrassment.

Stair climbing, in contrast, offers the benefits of aerobic and resistance exercise for improving cardiorespiratory fitness and leg muscle strength in postmenopausal women without their having to leave the house or pay a fee. It offers the additional benefits of fat loss, improved lipid profiles, and reduced risk of osteoporosis. Before this study, stair climbing had not been evaluated for its effects on blood pressure and arterial stiffness, which is a thickening and stiffening of the arterial wall.

In the article "The effects of stair climbing on arterial stiffness, blood pressure, and leg strength in postmenopausal women with stage 2 hypertension," results are provided from a study involving Korean postmenopausal women who trained four days a week, climbing 192 steps two to five times a day. The study concluded that stair climbing led to reductions in arterial stiffness and blood pressure and increases in leg strength in stage 2 hypertensive postmenopausal women.

"This study demonstrates how simple lifestyle interventions such as stair climbing can be effective in preventing or reducing the negative effects of menopause and age on the vascular system and leg muscles of postmenopausal women with hypertension," says Dr. JoAnn Pinkerton, NAMS executive director.

For more information about menopause and healthy aging, visit www.menopause.org.

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Founded in 1989, The North American Menopause Society (NAMS) is North America's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting the health and quality of life of all women during midlife and beyond through an understanding of menopause and healthy aging. Its multidisciplinary membership of 2,000 leaders in the field—including clinical and basic science experts from medicine, nursing, sociology, psychology, nutrition, anthropology, epidemiology, pharmacy, and education—makes NAMS uniquely qualified to serve as the definitive resource for health professionals and the public for accurate, unbiased information about menopause and healthy aging. To learn more about NAMS, visit www.menopause.org.