



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm -AAA

What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm?

The aorta is the main artery of the chest and abdomen. It carries blood from the heart to all the body's vital organs, and to the legs and feet. An abdominal aortic, aneurysm AAA, is a weakening in the wall of the aorta that causes a widening or ballooning of a portion of the artery itself, much like a weak area of an old fashioned rubber inner tube. An aneurysm may continue to grow larger and, if not diagnosed and treated, can rupture, often causing death.

What are the risk factors?

- Over the age of 60
- Family history of AAAs
- High blood pressure
- Smoking
- The risk increases with age is more common in men than women. A family history is of special concern
- If any members in your family have been diagnosed with an AAA, let your health care provider know

What are the symptoms?

- Usually no symptoms
- Most are found by chance during routine physical examination, or the course of treatment or testing for other ailments
- Occasionally, a person may experience low back pain or abdominal pain
- Symptoms associated with an AAA require urgent attention

What is the treatment?

- If it is large, repair is done
- No treatment with medicines alone is enough for treating an AAA
- Surgery for AAAs has been done for almost 50 years and is a successful and durable procedure
- During surgery, the weakened portion of the aorta is replaced with a Dacron or Teflon graft that is carefully matched and sewn into place. The incision is on the abdomen or the flank.
- New endovascular grafting technology allows the vascular surgeon to repair the AAA by delivering a graft inside the blood vessels through a small incision in each groin
- Endovascular repair is not possible for every AAA

What can be done to prevent an abdominal aortic aneurysm?

- If you smoke, quit
- Keep your blood pressure under control
- Screening exams for AAA

Speak up at any time if you if you have any questions or concerns