

Roper St. Francis Heart & Vascular Center

Aneurysm News Line

What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)?

An aortic aneurysm develops from a weakness in the wall of the aorta, which is the main artery of the chest and abdomen that carries blood flow from the heart to all the vital organs, legs and feet.

Symptoms

- Abdominal pain
- Pain in the lower back sometimes radiating to the groin
- Pulsation in the abdomen

Note: Three out of four aneurysms show no symptoms when diagnosed.

Symptoms once the aneurysm bursts

- Severe back or abdominal pain
- Signs of shock (dizziness, fainting, sweating, rapid heartbeat and sudden weakness)
- Paleness

How is it diagnosed?

- Ultrasound scan (most common)
- Physical exam
- CT scan

A combination of early diagnosis and modern treatment can save lives

Risk factors

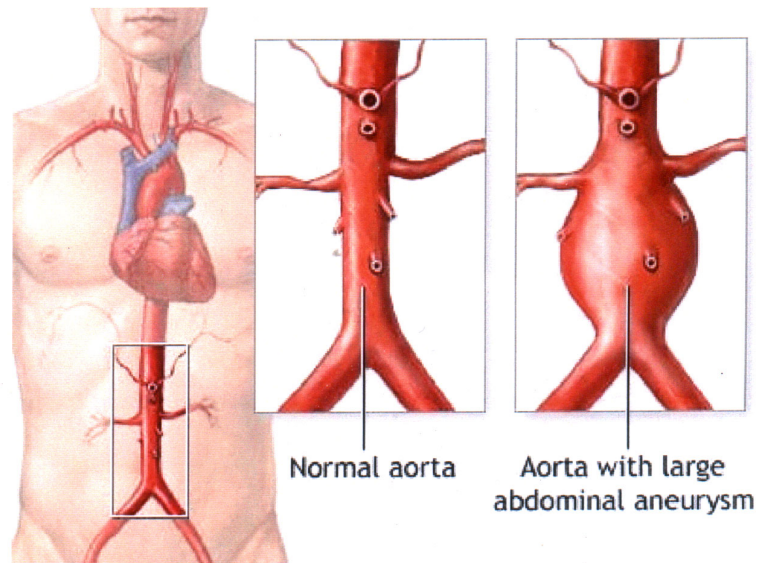
- Smoking
- Male gender
- Family history
- Hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis)
- Age 50+
- High blood pressure

If you or any one in your family has any of these risk factors, get screened.

Latest recommendation

- All men age 65 or older that have ever smoked should have an ultrasound screening test.
- Women age 65 or older should be screened if they have a family history of aortic aneurysms and have smoked.

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Recommended treatment options

- Treated by board-certified vascular surgeon
- Open surgery (curative)
- New less-invasive stent grafts (palliative)

Prevention techniques

- No smoking
- Eat a low-fat, low cholesterol diet
- 30-minutes of daily activity that increases your heart rate (walking)
- Control your blood pressure

Aneurysms

- 15th leading cause of death
- 10th leading cause of death over 70 years old
- More than 15,000 Americans die each year
- 4 times more common in men

Heart attacks

- #1 killer of adults
- 4,100 every day
- 600,000 deaths each year
- 1 in 4 males have some form of cardiovascular disease

Stroke

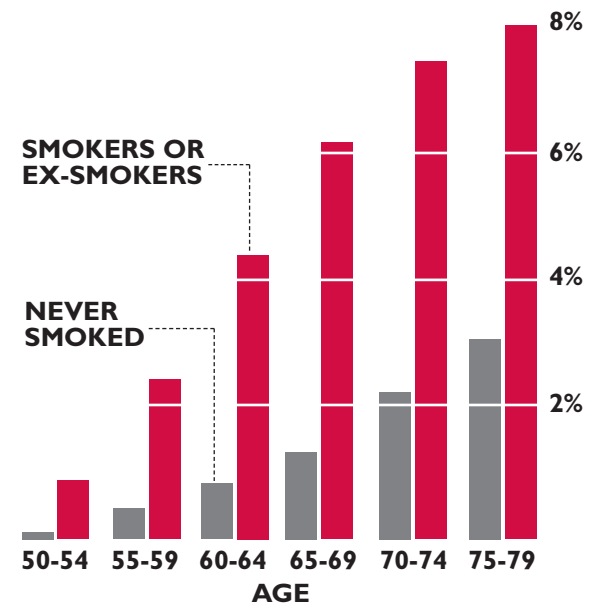
- #3 killer of adults
- 700,000 per year
- 1 every 45 seconds

Aneurysm Risk

The prevalence of abdominal aortic aneurysms among a predominantly-male sample increased with age and among smokers and ex-smokers.

PATIENTS WITH ANEURYSMS

*larger than three centimeters
(surgery recommended at 5.5 cm)*



Source: *Annals of Internal Medicine*

For more information on screening and treatment, call 843-720-5665.

Source: US Preventive Services Task Force, Emedicine.com, Lifeline Screening, Society of Interventional Radiology

