



Nicolas N. Doan Van, MD, FACC, Inc.
Robert S. Greenfield, MD, FACC, FAHA, FNLA, Inc.
Thuy T. Le, MD, FACC, Inc.
Arvind S. Nirula, MD, FACC, FSCAI, Inc.
Sanjiv M. Patel, MD, FACC, FSCAI
Steven M. Schiff, MD, FACC, Inc.
Surinder S. Thind, MD, FACC, FSCAI
Jennifer Lee Wong, MD, FACC, Inc.
Amarpal S. Chana, MD
Amanda M. Donohue, DO

ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM

What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)?

Your arteries deliver oxygen-rich blood from your heart to other parts of your body. The aorta, the largest artery in your body, runs from your heart, down through your chest, and into your abdomen. The abdominal part of the aorta is responsible for delivering blood to your legs, GI tract, and kidneys.

An abdominal aortic aneurysm occurs when the wall of the aorta progressively weakens and begins to bulge. An AAA may continue to enlarge and eventually rupture if left untreated, causing severe internal bleeding and possible death. In addition to concerns about rupture, clots or debris may also develop within an AAA. These substances can be carried to other areas in the body and block circulation, causing severe pain or possible limb loss if blood flow is cut off for too long.

AAA can be safely treated with early diagnosis. Nearly 200,000 people in United States are diagnosed with AAA annually; approximately 15,000 die each year from a ruptured AAA.

What causes AAA and what are the risk factors?

Most aortic aneurysms are caused by a breakdown in the proteins that provide structural strength to the wall of the aorta. Some risk factors that contribute to this structural breakdown include: AGE – individual over 60 year, Family history of AAA, Smoking, Hypertension, Male Gender, History of atherosclerosis, Chronic lung disease

What are the symptoms?

Most people feel no symptoms, and an AAA is often detected when tests are conducted for other reasons. Some symptoms are: a pulsing feeling in their abdomen; unexplained, severe pain in their abdomen or lower back; pain, discoloration, or sores on their feet (rare symptom)

How do you diagnose it?

If you have any of the symptoms or have AAA, you need to see your physician about it. You may need an ultrasound screening or a CT scan to look at the aorta.

What are the treatments?

The most important factor determining the treatment of AAAs is its size. It may require lifestyle changes, such as quitting smoking, lowering blood pressure, and taking medication. For large AAAs, or those that have been increasing in size over time, repair may be carried out either by placement of an endovascular stent graft or by open bypass grafting surgery.

For more information, you can go to:

<http://www.uptodate.com/contents/patient-information-abdominal-aortic-aneurysm>

www.mayoclinic.com/health/DiseasesIndex/DiseaseIndex