

# So your ultrasound screening indicates an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

## Why should I be concerned?

The aorta is the body's largest artery and carries oxygen-rich blood from the heart to all your vital organs and to your legs and feet. Abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA) are serious and occur when the wall of your aorta progressively weakens and begins to bulge. An AAA may continue to enlarge and eventually rupture if it is left untreated, causing severe internal bleeding and possibly death. The risk of rupture is directly related to the size (diameter) of the AAA.

Other concerns are clots or debris that may develop within an AAA. These substances can be carried to other areas in your body and block circulation, causing severe pain or possibly limb loss if blood flow is cut off for too long.

Nearly 200,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with AAA annually; approximately 15,000 of those cases may be severe enough to cause death if not treated. Two-thirds of patients who suffer rupture of an AAA didn't know they had the aneurysm until it ruptured.

## What should I do?

If left untreated, your AAA has the potential of rupturing. When this occurs, it is a surgical emergency. Many patients do not even survive long enough to make it to the hospital, and among those who do, more than half eventually die of complications.

Ask your primary care physician to recommend a vascular surgeon for a diagnosis or find one in your area at [www.VascularWeb.org](http://www.VascularWeb.org).

## Risk Factors

- Individuals over 60 years are most likely to develop AAA
- Males are more prone to AAA than females
- History of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Family history of AAA
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Chronic lung disease

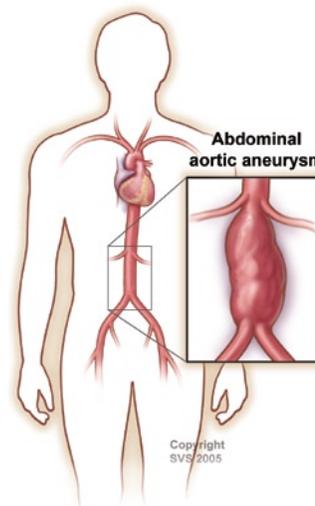
## Symptoms of AAA

Although AAA has few symptoms some patients report

- A pulsing feeling in their abdomen
- Unexplained, severe pain in their abdomen or lower back
- Pain, discoloration, or sores on their feet (this is a rare symptom)

## Consider treatment when your AAA

- Is larger than 5.0 cm. in diameter
- Is more than twice the size of a normal aorta
- Has grown significantly larger over time
- Causes symptoms
- Produces blockages in your circulation



Please call with any questions:

## Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Treatment Options

### Endovascular Stent Graft

Instead of undergoing direct open repair through an abdominal incision, vascular surgeons can replace the diseased segment of your aorta with a bypass graft through short incisions in the groin. By using catheters placed in the arteries in your groin, the stent graft is delivered into the diseased aortic aneurysm and held in place by stents, avoiding the need to actually suture the graft in place through an open abdominal incision. Patients are given a sedative and a regional anesthesia, or may receive general anesthesia. This treatment results in minimal discomfort and risk, and patients usually can leave the hospital one or two days after the procedure.

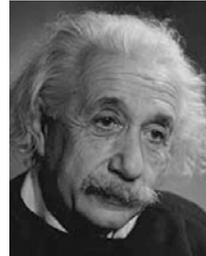
### Surgical Bypass

If your aneurysm is not suitable for stent graft repair, vascular surgeons will suture a bypass graft in place to replace the diseased aortic aneurysm through an open abdominal incision. With improvements in anesthesia and medical care, open AAA repair has become exceptionally safe in the hands of well-trained vascular surgical specialists. Most patients are able to be discharged from the hospital from the fourth through the seventh day following surgery.

Vascular surgeons are the only physicians treating vascular disease today who can perform all treatment options available, including medical management, minimally invasive endovascular stent graft procedures, and open aneurysm repair. The safest and most appropriate treatment for your AAA will depend on its size, location, and other anatomic factors. Vascular surgeons have been treating AAAs for decades and have pioneered the development of new less invasive approaches such as stent graft repair. Only when you see a vascular surgeon who performs all possible treatment options will you be assured of receiving the care that is most appropriate to your specific condition.

**Please call with any questions:**

### You're in good company



Albert Einstein



George S. Patton



Lucille Ball



Joe DiMaggio

*Al, George, Lucy, Joe... common names, but uncommon people.*

*These celebrities made countless contributions, but they all had their lives cut short by ruptured AAA. When an AAA ruptures, 50 to 75 percent of people do not survive...even when they are famous. Even if you're not famous...see a vascular surgeon for the best treatment.*

For more information visit:

[www.VascularWeb.org](http://www.VascularWeb.org)  
or call 877-282-2010