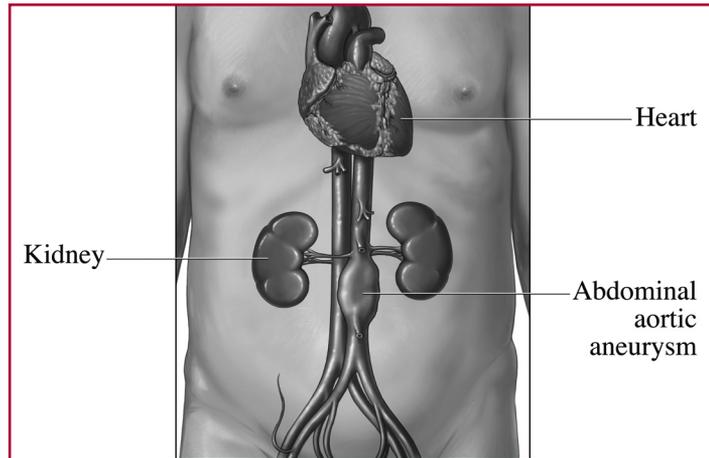


WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ABDOMINAL AORTIC ANEURYSM

In the Clinic
Annals of Internal Medicine
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What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm?

Blood moves from the heart to other parts of the body through arteries. The abdominal aorta is the main artery in the belly, which is also called the abdomen. An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) occurs when the wall of the aorta gets too big. This is caused by a weakening of the wall of the aorta. If the enlarged aorta breaks, blood can then leak into the body.



Is AAA a big problem?

Yes. It is the 14th most common cause of death in the United States. In older men, it is the 10th most common cause of death.

What are the symptoms of AAA?

There are no symptoms of AAA until it breaks. If blood does leak out, there may be pain in the back or belly, weakness, or fainting.

How is AAA found?

The doctor may feel the AAA when pressing on the belly. The best way to find AAA is by doing a test called an ultrasonography of the abdomen.

Who should have a screening test for AAA?

A screening test is done to look for a disease when there are no symptoms. Experts recommend that older men who smoke should have a screening test for AAA. Experts do not recommend a screening test for other people.

Who is most likely to have an AAA?

Cigarette smoking makes the chances of having an AAA greater than anything else. Being older, of white race, male, and a smoker all add to the risk for having an AAA.

If screening finds AAA, what should be done?

The greatest chance that the AAA could break is if it is larger than 2 in (5.5 cm). If it is smaller than 2 in, the doctor will do an ultrasonography test, tell the patient to stop smoking, and treat the patient's high blood pressure. If the AAA is 2 in or more, doctors usually do surgery to fix it.

For More Information

Web Sites With Information on Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm:

www.medem.com/medlib/article/ZZZVTBUUBZE

JAMA Patient Page: Aortic Aneurysms

www.medicinenet.com/abdominal_aortic_aneurysm

Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm index from
Medicinenet.com

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