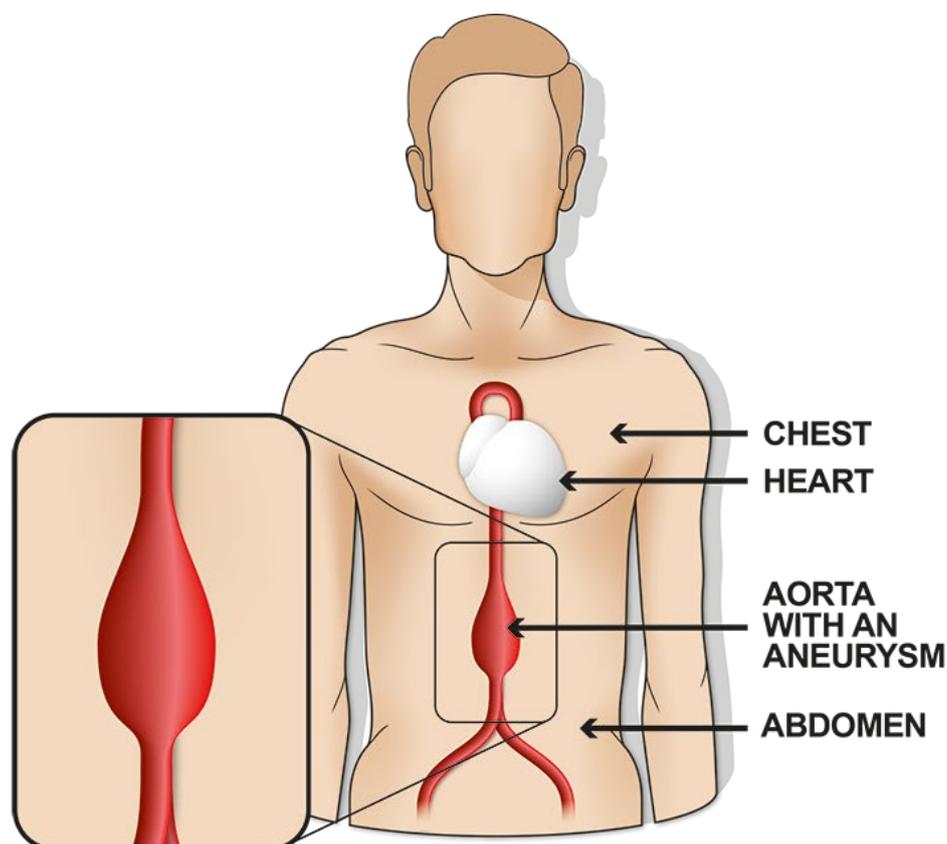


# Your screening results: you have a large abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)

Public Health England (PHE) created this information on behalf of the NHS. In this information, the word 'we' refers to the NHS service that provides screening.



## Who this information is for

This information is for men who have had a **large aneurysm** found through abdominal aortic aneurysm screening (also called AAA screening).

When you were screened we found that your aorta is much wider than normal. This means that you have a large abdominal aortic aneurysm that may need treatment – usually surgery. Around 1 in 1,000 men who are screened have a large AAA. We will now arrange an appointment for you to see a specialist for further tests and to talk about possible treatment.

## What an abdominal aortic aneurysm is

The aorta is the main blood vessel that supplies blood to your body. It runs from your heart down through your chest and abdomen.

In some people, as they get older, the wall of the aorta in the abdomen can become weak. It can then expand and form what is called an abdominal aortic aneurysm.

## **How serious a large AAA is**

A large aneurysm can be very serious because as the wall of the aorta stretches, it becomes weaker and can burst, causing internal bleeding. This is a medical emergency. Around 85 out of 100 people die when an aneurysm bursts.

The risk of a large AAA bursting is generally much greater than any risks from surgery to repair the aneurysm.

## **What happens next**

We have passed your details to a specialist vascular team who will give you an appointment in the next 2 weeks. The specialists:

- will ask you about your medical history
- will carry out a full examination
- may arrange further tests on your heart, lungs and kidneys to assess your general health
- will talk to you about the benefits and risks of treatment
- will answer any questions you have

We will tell your GP the result of your scan.

## **The operation**

Treatment for aneurysms that are found using screening is usually very effective.

However, all operations have risks and around 1 in 60 people die after surgery to repair an AAA. When you see the specialist vascular team, they will talk to you about treatment and the possible risks.

## **If the operation is right for you**

The specialist will talk to you about the right treatment for you. In a small number of men surgery may have very high risks or may not be possible. This might be if you have other serious medical conditions. In some cases, where the medical condition will not improve, surgery may not be suitable.

Having an operation is your choice. If you do not have an operation, the specialist team will talk to you about other options.

## Looking after your health

You can help look after your health by:

- seeking help to try to cut down or stop smoking, if you are a smoker
- making sure your blood pressure is normal – if you have not had it checked recently, it is worth getting it checked
- eating a healthy, balanced diet and cutting down on fatty food
- trying to lose weight, if you are overweight
- taking regular exercise
- keeping within sensible limits, if you drink alcohol

You do not need to make any other changes to your lifestyle and should continue with any sports or hobbies.

Your GP practice will be able to give you advice on all of the above and may also want to give you medication or review your current medication.

## Symptoms

If you have an aneurysm, you will not generally notice any symptoms, so it is unlikely that you will feel any pain or discomfort from a large aneurysm.

If you go into hospital for any reason, you should let the staff know that you have an abdominal aortic aneurysm found through screening.

If you have questions about your screening result, you can phone your local screening programme. If you feel generally unwell, you should speak to your GP.

## Symptoms of a burst aneurysm

It is important that you are aware of any symptoms of a burst AAA.

If you have **new symptoms of severe, persistent abdominal and/or lower back pain**, you should seek immediate medical help through an accident and emergency department. Make sure you tell any medical staff that you have an AAA.

If you have questions about your screening result, you can phone your local screening programme. If you feel generally unwell, you should speak to your GP.

## Close family

The risk of having an AAA increases if your brother, sister or parent has, or has had, an abdominal aortic aneurysm.

You should therefore inform any brothers, sisters or children that your AAA means that they are also at risk. They can ask their GP about the possibility of requesting a scan at an age 5 years earlier than the age at which your AAA was found.

## Driving

Car drivers:

1. You must inform the DVLA if your aneurysm grows to 6cm.
2. Your licence will be suspended if your aneurysm grows to 6.5cm.
3. Your licence will be reinstated after your aneurysm has been successfully treated.

Bus, coach and lorry drivers:

1. You must inform the DVLA that you have an aneurysm.
2. Your licence will be suspended.
3. Your licence will be reinstated after your aneurysm has been successfully treated.

## Health-related insurance

If you declare your AAA when applying for travel or any other health-related insurance you may be charged an additional premium or have the condition excluded from cover. When looking for cover, a broker can help. The British Insurance Brokers Association operates a 'find a broker' service. Visit [their website](#) or call 0370 950 1790.

## More information

You can get more information at:

- your GP practice
- your local screening programme
- NHS.UK at [www.nhs.uk/aaa](http://www.nhs.uk/aaa)
- Circulation Foundation at [www.circulationfoundation.org.uk](http://www.circulationfoundation.org.uk)
- British Heart Foundation at [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

The NHS Screening Programmes use personal information from your NHS records to invite you for screening at the right time. Public Health England also uses your information to ensure you receive high quality care and to improve the screening programmes. Find out more about how your information is used and protected, and your options at [www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data](http://www.gov.uk/phe/screening-data).

Find out how to opt out of screening at [www.gov.uk/phe/screening-opt-out](http://www.gov.uk/phe/screening-opt-out).

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