



Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm



Overview

The aorta is your body's main artery. It carries blood down along the front of your spine to the parts of your body below your heart. If the wall of your aorta in your abdomen weakens and balloons outward, you have an abdominal aortic aneurysm. It's a serious condition, and one that often has no warning signs.

Causes

We aren't sure what causes the wall of the aorta to weaken and bulge. It's most common in white men over the age of 60. Your risk is higher if you are a smoker, or if you have high blood pressure. It's higher if you have atherosclerosis, or if you have had other aneurysms. Your risk is also higher if you have a family history of this condition.

Symptoms

An aneurysm may not cause any symptoms. But when the wall of your aorta gets too weak, it could tear open and bleed inside your body. If this happens, you may feel sudden pain in your abdomen or your back. This pain may spread down through your body to your legs. You may have nausea and vomiting. You may have a rapid heart rate and clammy skin. You may pass out, and you may go into shock. A ruptured aorta is a medical emergency that is often fatal.

Treatment

A small aortic aneurysm may not need treatment. Your doctor can watch it closely for changes. A large aneurysm can be treated with surgery. A ruptured aorta needs immediate medical attention. Your healthcare provider can create a care plan that is right for you.