



# ANEURYSM



## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

A ballooning or bulge in the wall of a blood vessel (almost always an artery). It can affect the arteries in the chest, abdomen, brain, legs, or heart wall. Aneurysms have thin, weak walls and have a tendency to rupture (burst) and cause hemorrhage (bleeding). They occur most often in adults over age 55.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Usually, there are no symptoms unless the aneurysm ruptures. Symptoms that occur depend on the artery affected.
- Thoracic (chest) aneurysm produces pain in the chest, neck, back, and abdomen. The pain may be sudden and sharp.
- Cerebral aneurysm in a brain artery produces headache (often throbbing), weakness, paralysis or numbness, pain behind the eye, vision change or partial blindness, and eye pupils of different sizes.
- Abdominal aneurysm produces back pain (sometimes severe), and abdomen and groin pain.
- Peripheral aneurysm in a leg artery causes poor circulation in the leg, with weakness and paleness or swelling and bluish color.
- Ventricular aneurysm in the wall of the heart causes irregular heartbeat, shortness of breath, and chest pain.

### CAUSES

Arterial walls become weak due to defect, disease, or injury. This may be due to an acquired condition, or it may be congenital (present at birth).

### RISK INCREASES WITH

- Adults over 55.
- Family history of aneurysms.
- Atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries).
- High blood pressure.
- Congenital weak artery.
- Polycystic disease or connective tissue disorders.
- Complications of blood infections.
- Fibromuscular dysplasia.
- Injury (trauma).
- Cigarette smoking.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

No specific way to prevent aneurysms. Seek treatment for any risk factors where possible.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Diagnosed, unruptured aneurysms may or may not be treated. You may be followed up with regular medical exams to watch for complications.
- Outcome of a ruptured aneurysm varies. Some persons are treated and recover with little or no damage. Others die before, during, or after treatment.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Stroke.
- Rupture of the aneurysm.



## DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Emergency treatment is needed for persons with symptoms of a ruptured aneurysm. Once the aneurysm is diagnosed, surgery may be performed. This is done to stop any bleeding and to prevent the aneurysm from recurring. Treatments called endovascular procedures can be done to plug (clog) the blood vessel (embolize).
- Unruptured aneurysms may be diagnosed when a person has no symptoms. Sometimes they are found when medical tests are done for other reasons. The decision to treat or not treat these aneurysms with surgery is difficult. Both options carry risks. Your health care provider will discuss the risks and benefits of each with you. The size of the aneurysm, its location, the patient's symptoms, age, health status, and preferences must all be considered.
- To learn more: An Internet search for additional information may be helpful in educating yourself.

### MEDICATIONS

- After surgery, anticoagulants to prevent blood clots and pain relievers are usually prescribed.
- Antibiotics to prevent infection may be prescribed.

### ACTIVITY

If surgery is done, you will be advised of any limits.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of a ruptured aneurysm. This is an emergency! Call for help; rest in bed until help arrives.
- You or a family member has minor pain or aching in the chest, abdomen, or legs. Fever or weight loss occurs for no apparent reason.

