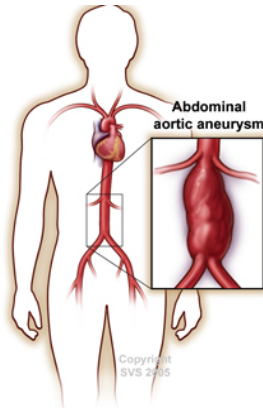


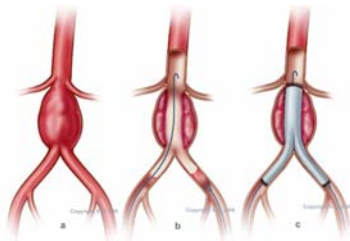
Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

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Aortic aneurysms are weak, dilated areas of the main artery in the abdomen that can rupture much like a balloon popping. When this happens, one can bleed to death rapidly.



The good news is that if detected early, aneurysms can be treated and rupture prevented. In essence, the weakened area of the aorta can be replaced, and this can be done either by a standard open operation or by new, minimally-invasive techniques that involve placement of a stent-graft through a catheter with little or no incisions.

Most patients today are treated with the minimally-invasive, stent-graft method. This is a great advance because it involves little discomfort, a short two-to three-day stay in the hospital, and rapid recovery to normal activities.

However, not all patients are suitable for the stent-graft method. In that case, the standard open operation can be performed. This is a major operation that has been around for 50 years, but very successful in treating aneurysms. Vascular surgeons have been trained in both of these procedures and can recommend the best and most effective treatment that will permanently protect one from fatal rupture.

Aortic aneurysms are common in people over the age of 60 who are, or ever have been a cigarette smoker and people who have a family history of aneurysms. They may also be found in people who have heart disease and peripheral artery disease or PAD. Aortic aneurysms are silent killers in that they usually go undetected until they begin to rupture and cause pain in the abdomen or back. Then, it may be too late.

People with any of these characteristics should be screened with an ultrasound exam. There is a simple screening test to detect the presence of an aneurysm. This involves an ultrasound exam based on sound waves that is painless and relatively inexpensive.

To learn more about your vascular health and find a vascular surgeon visit VascularWeb.org.