

NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme



Information for Health Professionals

The NHS Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme was implemented throughout England between 2009 and 2013.

Research shows that offering men ultrasound screening in their 65th year should reduce the rate of premature death from ruptured AAA by up to 50 per cent.

The screening process

Men are automatically invited for screening in the year they turn 65

Men who are older than 65, and who have not previously been screened, can opt in through self-referral direct to the screening programme

Men who have previously been treated for an abdominal aortic aneurysm are excluded from screening



Men receive an invitation leaflet with an appointment three weeks in advance



If a man accepts the invitation, an ultrasound scan of the abdomen is carried out and the aortic diameter measured



Results are provided verbally immediately after the scan and in the post shortly afterwards

Structure and delivery

The NHS AAA Screening Programme is coordinated and led nationally by Public Health England. Screening services are delivered locally in line with national quality standards and protocols.

There are around 40 local screening services covering the whole of England.

Each local service coordinates screening for the population in its area and organises invitation letters, screening and surveillance clinics, results letters and referrals to the appropriate vascular network.

The local screening services ensure GPs are informed when men from their practice have been screened and of the outcomes of their screening test.

Prevalence

- Around 3,000 deaths each year in men aged 65 and over in England and Wales from ruptured AAA
- Deaths from ruptured AAA account for 1.7% of all deaths in men aged 65 and over
- Around one in 70 men aged 65 in England has an AAA

Risk factors

- The main risk factors are age and being male; two out of every three deaths from ruptured AAA in England and Wales occur in men who are over 65
- The condition is six times more common in men than women
- Risk is increased by smoking, high blood pressure or through close family history

Result	Follow-up	Primary Care
Normal (985 in 1,000 men)		
Aortic diameter Less than 3cm No aneurysm detected	No treatment or further scans required Man discharged from screening programme	GP informed of outcome by letter

Small or medium aneurysm (14 in 1,000 men)

Aortic diameter measures: 3 to 4.4cm (Small aneurysm) 4.5 to 5.4cm (Medium aneurysm)	Man offered yearly surveillance Man offered three monthly surveillance Appointment with nurse practitioner/vascular nurse offered at or before first surveillance scan	GP is informed, by letter, of the outcomes of screening and appointment with nurse Review and prescribing of medication may be appropriate Patient may require regular blood pressure monitoring Steps patient can take which may slow growth of the aneurysm: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eat a healthy balanced diet and reduce intake of fatty foods ● Stop smoking ● Maintain a healthy weight ● Take regular exercise
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Large aneurysm (1 in 1,000 men)

Aortic diameter 5.5cm or above	Man referred to consultant vascular surgeon within defined and agreed Screening Programme Vascular Network by screening programme coordinator	GP informed by phone call/fax and then by letter Steps patient can take in advance of potential treatment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Eat a healthy balanced diet and reduce intake of fatty foods ● Stop smoking ● Maintain a healthy weight
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Non-visualised

Repeat scan required	Man offered appointment at hospital medical imaging department	GP informed by letter
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Further information for patients

- **National leaflets** – all men invited receive a copy of a national invitation leaflet. Men who have a small, medium or large aneurysm detected receive additional national information leaflets
- **Local AAA screening programme** – the phone number for the local screening programme is on the invitation and follow-up letters
- **NHS AAA Screening Programme**
www.nhs.uk/aaa
- **AAA Screening Patient Decision Aid** – for men who want help in deciding whether to be screened – www.nhs.uk/aaadecisionaid

Further information for health professionals

- **NHS AAA Screening Programme** – Visit www.nhs.uk/aaa or scan this QR code with your smartphone for further information on the national programme
- Speak to your **local AAA screening programme coordinator**
- **Map of Medicine** – the care pathway for the NHS AAA Screening Programme is published on Map of Medicine. See healthguides.mapofmedicine.com
- **GP Notebook** – online medical information available at www.gpnotebook.co.uk

