

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Learn about AAA Screening Medicare Benefit

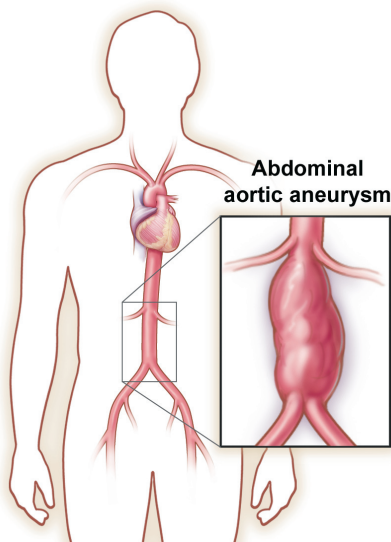
Medicare recognizes the importance of good vascular health and offers a free screening process to check for one of the vascular diseases, Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA). Qualified seniors are eligible for a one-time AAA ultrasound screening as part of their Welcome to Medicare physical. The physical must be conducted during the first 12 months of enrollment.

### Q Who qualifies for the Medicare screening?

- A
- Men who have smoked sometime during their life
  - Men and women with a family history of AAA

### Q What is Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm?

- A
- Blood flows freely when this system is open, but as we age, our arteries tend to thicken, get stiffer, and narrow. To maintain an active lifestyle during our senior years, we need to make certain there are no weak areas or blockages in our vascular system.



Please call with any questions:

AAA is an enlargement or “bulge” that develops in a weakened area within the largest artery in the abdomen. The pressure generated by each heartbeat pushes against the weakened aortic wall, causing the aneurysm to enlarge. If the AAA remains undetected, the aortic wall continues to weaken, and the aneurysm continues to grow. Eventually, the aneurysm becomes so large, and its wall so weak, that rupture occurs. When this happens there is massive internal bleeding, a situation that is usually fatal. The only way to break this cycle is to find the AAA before it ruptures.

### Q Should I be worried?

- A
- AAA can be safely treated or cured with early diagnosis. Nearly 200,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with AAA annually; approximately 15,000 of these cases may be severe enough to cause death if no treated. This Medicare screening benefit is expected to save thousands of lives.

### Q Are there Symptoms?

- A
- Most people feel no symptoms, and an AAA is often detected when tests are conducted for other unrelated reasons. Those with symptoms describe them as:
- A pulsing feeling in their abdomen
  - Unexplained, severe pain in their abdomen or lower back
  - Pain, discoloration, or sores on their feet (This is a rare symptom)

### Q What is the screening procedure?

- A
- Medicare offers an ultrasound screening that is a painless, safe, and accurate way to detect AAA.

### Q What should I do if my screening indicates there is an AAA?

- A
- See a vascular surgeon. They are the only physicians treating vascular disease today who can perform all the treatment options available, including medical management, minimally invasive endovascular angioplasty and stent procedures, and open bypass surgery. Only when you see a vascular surgeon who offers all treatment modalities will you be assured of receiving the care that is most appropriate.

For more information visit [VascularWeb.org](http://VascularWeb.org)