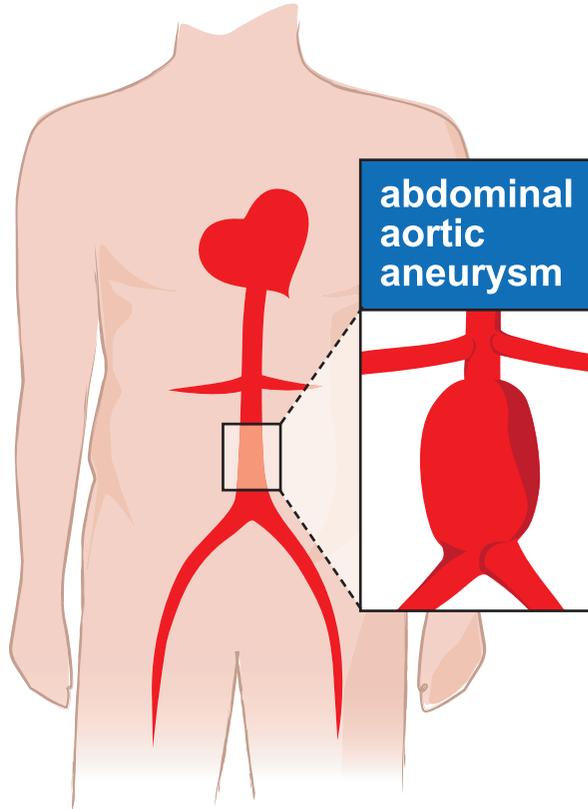


Rhaglen Sgrinio  
Ymlediadau Aortig  
Abdomenol Cymru



Wales Abdominal  
Aortic Aneurysm  
Screening Programme



# Large Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

Your scan result shows a large  
abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)  
What happens now?

[phw.nhs.wales/aaa-screening](http://phw.nhs.wales/aaa-screening)



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus  
Cymru  
Public Health  
Wales

## Large AAA - What happens now?

This leaflet is available in alternative formats, for example large print or Braille. Please call your local screening office on the number in your invitation letter.

**This leaflet provides information for men who have had a large abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) found through AAA screening.**

### **Your AAA screening result**

We found that a section of your abdominal aorta is a lot wider than expected. **This means you have a large abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) that should be assessed for treatment options.**

Around one man out of 1,000 (0.1%) who go for screening have a large AAA. This condition has almost certainly been present for some time, developing very slowly.

## Diagram to show an abdominal aorta and an aorta with an aneurysm

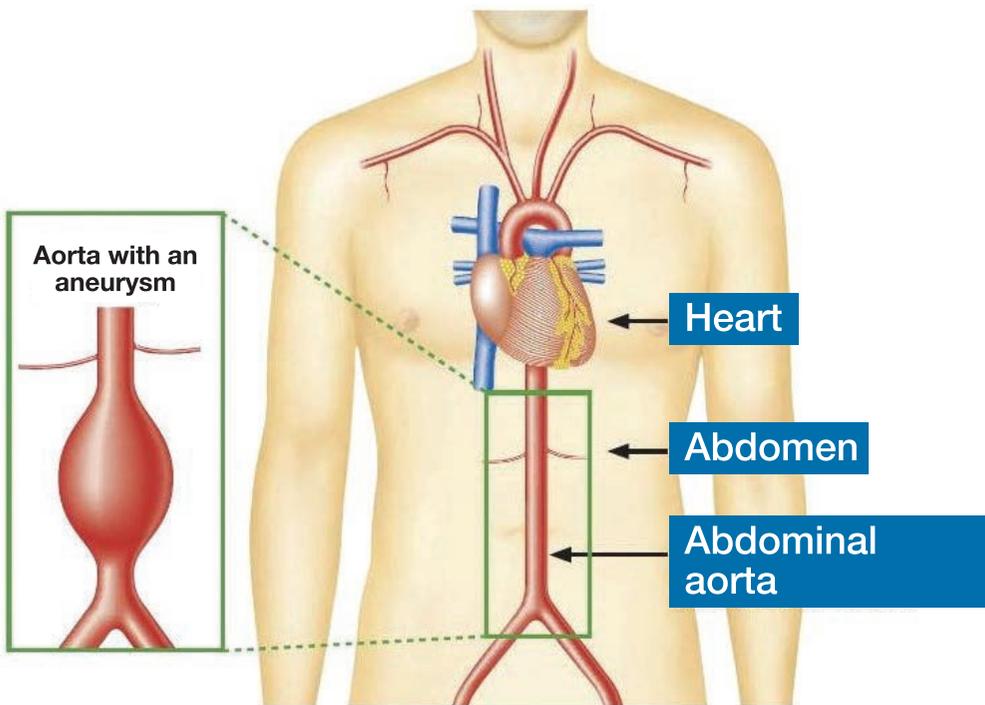
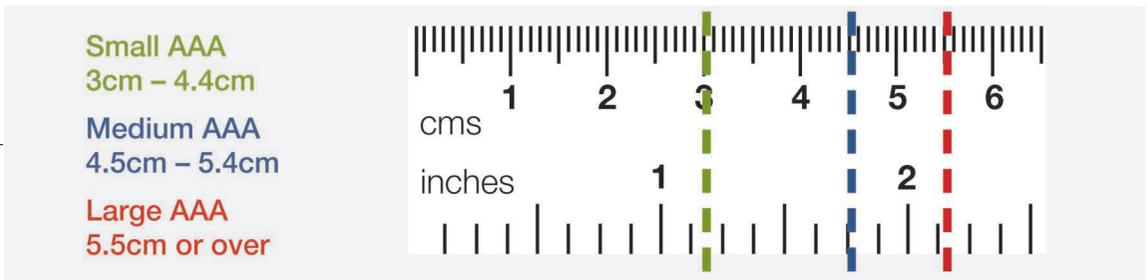


Image courtesy of the NHS  
Screening Programme (England)

## Large AAA - What happens now?

### What is an AAA?

The aorta is the main blood vessel that supplies blood to the body. Sometimes the wall of the aorta in the abdomen can become weak and stretch to form an aneurysm. When this happens there is a risk that the aorta may split or tear, which is called a rupture. The larger the AAA, the bigger the risk of rupture.



### Is my AAA serious?

**A large AAA is serious** because the risk of a rupture to the aorta wall increases with AAA growth. A ruptured AAA leads to serious internal bleeding, which can be fatal.

**It is important that you are aware of any symptoms of a ruptured AAA.**

**If you have been diagnosed with a large AAA and have new symptoms of severe, persistent abdominal or lower back pain (or both), you should go to an accident and emergency department immediately.** Make sure you tell any medical staff that you have a large AAA found through screening.

If you contact a health professional for any other reason, you should again let them know that you have a large AAA found through screening.

## Large AAA - What happens now?

### What happens next?

We will contact you by phone within five days of your AAA scan. We will discuss your result in more detail and give you advice on your general health and how other conditions may affect your AAA. The hospital specialist nurse will also contact you.

If you have any immediate concerns, you can contact the local screening office in your area on the number set out on page 12. You can also contact your GP.

You will be sent a letter with an appointment to meet the hospital specialist team who will offer advice and assess your options for managing your AAA. This appointment will usually take place within two weeks of your scan.

**Please make sure that you are available during this period and change any travel plans you may have. If you change address in the meantime, please tell the local screening office as soon as possible.**

We will also write to your GP with the result of your scan.

## What happens at the appointment with the specialist team?

### The specialists:

- will ask you about your medical history;
- will examine your abdomen;
- will arrange another scan at the hospital;
- may arrange further tests on your heart, lungs and kidneys to assess your general health; and
- will talk to you about the risks and benefits of all the options available to you.

After being assessed by the specialists, you may be offered an operation to treat your large AAA. All men will have the opportunity to ask the specialists any questions they may have.

## Large AAA - What happens now?

### What happens in the operation?

Generally there are two types of treatment available.

**1. Open repair:** This is an operation that stitches a piece of material, called a graft, inside the abdominal aorta, to strengthen the artery at the point of the AAA and reduce the chance of it rupturing. It is done through a large cut in your abdomen.

**2. Endovascular aneurysm repair (EVAR):** This is an operation that places an artificial piece of artery, called a stent, inside your abdominal aorta, to strengthen the abdominal aorta at the point of the AAA and reduce the chance of it rupturing. It is done through small cuts in your groin to access your arteries. You will need follow-up scans to make sure that the stent has not moved.

### Do I need to have an operation?

For most men diagnosed with a large AAA, surgery is the most effective treatment, but having an operation is your choice. If you do not want to have an operation, the specialists will discuss this with you.

### **Are there any risks in having an operation?**

All operations have risks. When you see the specialist team, they will talk to you about treatment and the possible risks. The specialist team will talk to you about the right treatment for you.

The chances of recovery from AAA surgery are much better than the chances of recovery if the large AAA is ignored and later ruptures. If this happens, it can be fatal.

### **What if I cannot have an operation?**

For a small number of men, an operation may have very high risks. This is usually when they have other serious medical conditions. If this is the case, the hospital specialist team will discuss this with you.

## Large AAA - What happens now?

### Can I do anything to stop the AAA getting bigger?

There are some things you can do that may slow the growth of your AAA. The following general recommendations may be helpful, particularly if surgery is being considered.

- If you stop smoking before your operation you are much less likely to suffer from:
  - **breathing and lung problems;**
  - **infections; and**
  - **slow healing of wounds.**
- If you are a smoker, stop smoking. Find the support you need by calling Help Me Quit on: **0800 085 2219**
- Make sure your blood pressure is normal. If you have not had it measured recently, get it checked by your GP.



## These are some other things that can also improve your general health?

- Have a healthy, balanced diet.
- If you are overweight, try to lose weight.
- Take regular exercise.
- If you drink alcohol, reduce the amount you drink.

## Driving with an AAA

The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) is responsible for deciding whether people can drive on the basis of their health or any conditions they may have.

Having a large AAA may mean you must not drive until you have received treatment. Your GP and the hospital specialist team can advise you whether or not you should drive.

Latest information can be found on the GOV.UK website.  
[www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/health-conditions-and-driving)  
[www.gov.uk/aneurysm-and-driving](http://www.gov.uk/aneurysm-and-driving)

## Large AAA - What happens now?

### How can I find out more?

For more information about anything in this leaflet:

- call the local screening office on  
**South East Wales: 01443 23 51 61**  
**South West Wales: 01792 45 31 62**  
**North Wales: 01492 86 35 63**
- contact your GP; or
- visit [phw.nhs.wales/aaa-screening](http://phw.nhs.wales/aaa-screening)

You can also get information and support from the Circulation Foundation. This is a UK charity for people who have diseases of the veins and arteries, known as vascular diseases, including AAAs.

### Circulation Foundation:

**Phone: 020 7304 4779**

**[www.circulationfoundation.org.uk](http://www.circulationfoundation.org.uk)**

### The Vascular Society of Great Britain and Ireland

The Vascular Society of Great Britain and Ireland is a registered charity set up to preserve, promote and protect the health of the public through excellence and innovation in vascular health, through education, audit and research.

**Phone: 020 7973 0306**

**[www.vascularsociety.org.uk](http://www.vascularsociety.org.uk)**

