

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Aortic Aneurysm**
- **Exercising in the Cold**
- **Vegetable Dip**
- **Holiday Heart Attacks**

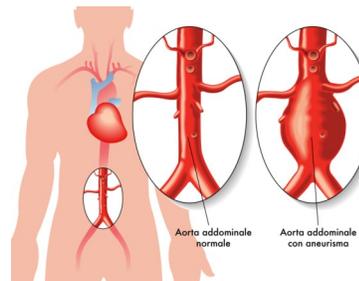


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What is an Aortic Aneurysm ?

What is an aortic aneurysm? Let's first start by talking about the aorta. The aorta is the large blood vessel that comes off of the heart and goes down into the chest, stomach, and eventually divides into the arteries that go into the legs. The aorta is depicted here in the picture to the right. The red vessel that is seen coming off of the heart and down into the abdomen is the aorta. An aortic aneurysm is a dilatation or enlargement of the aorta. Because of the length of the aorta, an aneurysm can occur in several different areas. The presence of an aortic aneurysm may indicate that other parts of the aorta are diseased as well. In fact, 13 percent of people with aortic aneurysms have more than one. So why do aneurysms occur? Aneurysms occur for different reasons



depending on the type of aneurysm. Let's start with the most common type which is the abdominal aortic aneurysm. Smoking is the biggest risk factor in developing this type of aneurysm. Age is a big risk as these are more likely to occur in men after age 55 and after age 70 in women. Being male is also a risk factor. High blood pressure, high cholesterol, and atherosclerosis (plaque build up in the arteries) increase the risk as well. How are abdominal aortic aneurysms diagnosed? In non obese individuals, this type of

aneurysm may be detected on a physical exam. Many times however, they are detected when tests are done for other reasons. An abdominal ultrasound, CT scan, or MRA are also non invasive ways with imaging to diagnose and detect this type of aneurysm. If an aneurysm is deemed to be large enough to repair, this can be done in a couple of ways. The traditional way is a surgical approach in which the aneurysm is opened and a synthetic prosthesis or graft is placed within it. The lesser invasive repair involves a percutaneous approach. In this procedure, a stent-graft is placed thru a catheter via the femoral artery. This is the artery shown above that is located in the groin. Before the aneurysm needs repaired and in some individuals who may not be able to undergo repair, medical therapy will be recommended. This will include smoking cessation. The use of medications called beta blockers and statins may also be used. Strict control of blood pressure is very important as well. Cont.....Pg 3. (4).

Tip of the Month

Exercising in Cold Weather:

1. Check the weather and temperature before going out. If temperature is below zero degrees F or the wind chill is extreme, you may want to consider exercising indoors.
2. Avoid wet conditions unless you wear waterproof gear.
3. Dress in layers with a thin layer of synthetic material first. This helps draw sweat away from your body to keep you dry. Add a layer of wool or fleece. Then put a waterproof layer on the outside. Take off a layer as you begin to sweat.
4. Hat, gloves, and warm socks are a must. If it is really cold, consider wearing a scarf or mask.
5. Drink a glass of water before exercising. You can get dehydrated in the winter just like the summer! (1).



Dill Vegetable Dip



Recipe From "Breaking the Salt Habit" by Erik Williams.

Ingredients:

1\4 cup Light Mayonnaise
 3\4 cup Light Sour Cream
 1 1\2 Tb. Dry Dill Weed
 3\4 tsp. Garlic Powder
 1\2 tsp. Oregano
 1\8 tsp. Ground Sage

Directions:

1. Mix all ingredients in a small bowl.
2. Serve.
3. May serve with any vegetable such as carrots, celery, cucumber, broccoli and many others.

Nutrition

Serving Size 1 Tb.
 Yields 16 servings

Calories: 25
 Total Fat: 2g
 Saturated Fat: 1g
 Cholesterol: 4mg
 Potassium: 11mg
 Carbs: 2g
 Protein: 1g
 Fiber: 0g
 Sugar: 1g
 Sodium: 28mg

Quote of the Month: "Only I can change my life. No one else can do it for me." Carol Burnett

Bible Verse of the Month:

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isiah 9:6).

Did you Know?

Did you Know that heart attacks are more likely to occur during the holiday season? From about Thanksgiving to New Year's Day, the number of heart attacks and deaths increase by a significant amount when compared to the rest of the year. Initially it was felt that maybe the colder temperature was the culprit. However, studies have shown that it is more than just the colder temperatures that play a role. It seems that there are many factors that may play a role with increased cardiac events during the holidays. These factors may include increased stress, increased fatty food intake, increased salt intake, and increased alcohol consumption. There may also be a delay in seeking medical treatment for a number of reasons. No one wants to disrupt Christmas and go to the ER right? (2,3).

Because every little detail is not known about this phenomenon, there is now way to completely prevent it. However, based on what is known, here are some tips. Do not delay medical treatment, even if that means being in the ER on Christmas Day. It may not be able to wait until the office opens back up. Do not forget to take your medications. Skipping one dose of some medications can cause your blood pressure and heart rate to spike and precipitate a cardiac event. Avoid or at least limit high fatty foods, alcohol, and high sodium foods. These too can trigger high blood pressure, an abnormal heart rhythm, and fluid retention. Avoid extremely cold temperatures and dress warm. Get enough sleep and work on keeping the stress level to a minimum. Lastly, have a Merry Christmas! (2,3).



Aortic Aneurysm Cont....

The Second type of aortic aneurysm is a thoracic aortic aneurysm. This means that it is located in the chest cavity. There are three types of thoracic aortic aneurysm and they are classified by their location: the ascending aorta, the arch, and the descending aorta. The ascending aortic aneurysm is the most common, followed by the descending location, and then the arch. The ascending aortic aneurysm can have several different causes. The most common cause is a degeneration in the tissue of the artery wall which is caused by changes at the cellular level. This can occur by itself or in conjunction with some connective tissue disorders. One of the most common disorders associated with this type of aneurysm is Marfan's syndrome. Atherosclerosis can cause an aneurysm in any of the locations, but more likely in the descending thoracic aorta. Certain types of infections, including Syphilis, have also been found as culprits. Please note there are several other disease processes that can result in this type of aneurysm that are not discussed in detail here.

So how are these types of aneurysms diagnosed? A chest x-ray may be able to capture many of the larger aneurysms but not the smaller ones. An echocardiogram may catch "the beginning" of an aneurysm and show an enlargement at the take off of the aorta. At that point, a CT scan or MRA may be ordered to further evaluate and measure the aorta.

In most cases, thoracic aortic aneurysms require open heart surgery to repair. These can be lengthy and complicated procedures. Newer lesser invasive techniques are being developed to repair some types of thoracic aortic aneurysms but the treatment is very patient and anatomy dependent. Generally, beta blockers are recommended as medical treatment prior to surgical repair. These medications help keep the heart rate and blood pressure under control.

To sum up, aortic aneurysms can be caused from many different causes. Some of these causes are preventable and some are not. Close monitoring, medical therapy, and surgical intervention when appropriate help decrease the risk of aortic dissection (rupture) and possible death. (4).