

Health & Nutrition

A Five Minute Screening May Save Your Life

More than one million people are living with undiagnosed Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms (AAA). An estimated 95 percent of all AAAs can be successfully treated if detected prior to rupture, but if undetected until rupture, only 10 to 25 percent of patients survive. All that is needed to avoid tragedy and save these lives is a simple ultrasound screening.

AAAs are described as a weakening and bulging of the aorta, the largest artery in the body, usually occurring in the abdominal portion of the artery. This can result in rupture, leading to profuse bleeding, shock and possibly death. They are the 15th-leading cause of death in the United States and the 3rd leading cause of sudden death in men over 60 years of age. The risk of AAA rises if you're a male, have a history of smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol or a family history of the disease, but according to recent published reports, anyone who has

undergone bypass surgery, or a coronary artery bypass graft (CABG), should also be tested.

A vascular surgery team, at Deborah Heart and Lung Center, in Browns Mills, N.J., led by Dr. Kane Chang, director of the South Jersey Aortic Program, has been successfully repairing these types of aneurysms for years, but the biggest challenge is finding patients who have AAAs before they rupture.

"For several years Deborah has encouraged patients who fit certain risk factors like age, smoking, hypertension, and family history to get a routine screening," said Dr. Chang. "Especially since the federal government now recognizes these risk factors and has included the quick, painless and noninvasive AAA screenings as part of their 'Welcome to Medicare' packet, there is no reason for patients to continue to suffer from this daunting condition."

Medicare's expanded preventive service benefits allow qualifying senior citizens to get free screenings to detect AAA. The screenings are available to men aged 65 to 75 who have smoked at least 100 cigarettes in their lifetime, men and women with a family history of AAAs, and any other individuals recommended for screening as part of their Welcome to Medicare physical.

Deborah urges patients who have had bypass surgery, and at least one of the risk factors to schedule an appointment for this life-saving screening, particularly since previous trial data has shown that CABG patients in high risk categories carry a much higher incidence of having an AAA. Deborah's staff is fully trained in both traditional open repairs and the new, less-invasive stent graft techniques for repairing AAAs. In fact, the hospital was one of the first in the region to perform the stent-graft repair technique for aneurysms in the chest, which is

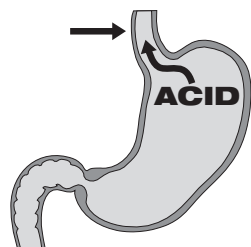
becoming the standard.

Deborah is working in conjunction with other health professionals in a national campaign to help raise awareness of this important issue and timely screenings. More information can be found at www.Deborah.org.

Doctors at Deborah urge all of those who qualify for this procedure to take five minutes and have this screening. Patients do not need a referral or vascular surgeon visit to make an appointment; simply call Deborah at 1-800-555-1990 for more information and to determine if they qualify.

Deborah Heart and Lung Center, Browns Mills, is a 139-bed teaching hospital that specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of congenital and acquired heart, lung and vascular diseases in adults, as well as providing outpatient cardiology services for children. For more information, visit www.deborah.org.

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