

MORRIS

Cardiovascular and Risk Reduction Center
Abdominal Aortic Ultrasound

An ultrasound of the abdominal aorta is a non-invasive, painless test that uses high frequency sound waves to image the "aorta," the main blood vessel leading away from the heart. This test is to assess for risk or presence of an aortic aneurysm.

What is an Aneurysm?

An aneurysm is a bulge in a blood vessel that is caused by a weakness in the wall. In some patients, particularly as you get older, the wall of the aorta can become weak. As the blood runs through the weakened blood vessel, the pressure of the blood causes the blood vessel to bulge outwards like a balloon.

The increase in diameter weakens the walls and increasing the risk of rupturing (splitting). If the aorta reaches over three centimeters in diameter, it is then called an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). As the aneurysm gets larger, the risk of rupture increases.

As a rule, once you develop an AAA, it tends to gradually get larger.

If you have an aneurysm, you will not notice any symptoms. Because the aorta is the largest blood vessel in the body, there is a high correlation of sudden rupture to mortality.

PLEASE FOLLOW THESE GUIDELINES FOR THE DAY PRIOR TO YOUR EXAM:

- The day prior to procedure: CLEAR liquids only
- 12 Hours Prior: No smoking or gum chewing
- 8 Hours Prior: No eating or drinking*
- *Take usual medications with a few sips of water (No breakfast)
- No dresses or 1-piece outfits (To avoid fully undressing)
- Do not apply cologne, body lotions or powder
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol for 24 hours

This test is approximately 30 minutes. After the test you may leave without restrictions, including the ability to resume your normal activities immediately.