

# **Abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening**

The Northern Ireland abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening programme offers free screening to men registered with GP in the year they turn 65 to help detect abdominal aortic aneurysms early, for monitoring and treatment before they become life threatening.

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## **What is abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)?**

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) is a widening of the main artery in the body, as it passes through the abdomen(stomach). The walls of the artery weaken, causing it to balloon out. It is more common in older men, smokers, people with high blood pressure and people with other cardiovascular diseases.

### **Why screening is important?**

Around 1 in 80 men screened in Northern Ireland at age 65 has an AAA. The aneurysm usually causes no symptoms and most people are not aware they have it. Not every aneurysm will burst, but if it does, the chances of getting to hospital and surviving surgery are very poor. A burst AAA leads to serious internal bleeding, which is fatal in 8 out of 10 cases.

## **Who is offered a screening in Northern Ireland?**

The Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme offers AAA screening to all men who are registered with a GP in the year they turn 65 (1 April to 31 March).

Men over the age of 65, who have not previously been scanned as part of the programme or been told they have an aneurysm can self-refer to the programme.

The overall aim of the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme is to reduce deaths from burst abdominal aortic aneurysms through early detection, monitoring and treatment.

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## Key resources

- Information leaflet: [Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm \(AAA\) Screening Programme \(with translations\)](#).
- FAQs: [The Northern Ireland Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme: FAQs | HSC Public Health Agency](#)
- Further information: [Abdominal aortic aneurysm screening programme | nidirect](#)