

Wednesday, 30 July 2025

Service Development and Screening

The Northern Ireland
Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm
Screening Programme: FAQs



1. What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm

The aorta is the main artery that supplies blood to your body. It runs from your heart down through your chest and abdomen (stomach). As some people get older, the wall of the aorta in the abdomen can become weak and balloon out to form an aneurysm, rather like a bulge in a worn car tyre. This is called an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA).

As the wall of the aorta stretches, it becomes weaker and can burst. A burst aneurysm is a life-threatening emergency.

2. Why do we have an AAA screening programme?

Screening programmes aim to prevent problems by detecting medical conditions early, so that they can be monitored or treated. AAA screening saves lives by detecting large aneurysms before they burst.

The programme was introduced following research evidence, pilot programmes and economic evaluation. The UK National Screening Committee assessed the evidence around the introduction of an AAA screening programme against a set of internationally recognised criteria to ensure that it will deliver benefits at a reasonable cost.

3. How do we raise awareness of the AAA screening programme?

Staff within the programme raise awareness of AAA screening in a variety of ways, including attending public events and small group events.

4. Why are men under 65 and women not screened?

AAA screening is not routinely offered to men under 65 or to women because most burst AAAs happen in men over 65. Men are six times more likely to have an AAA than women. There's not enough evidence to suggest that routinely screening women and younger men would deliver major benefits.

5. What if I have a close family member with an AAA?

If you have a close family member who has had an AAA, you should contact your GP to consider whether a scan should be requested to check for an AAA. If your GP feels you might benefit from having a scan, it will usually be done when you are five years younger than the age that your relative was found to have an AAA.

6. Where can I be screened?

There are 24 screening centres across Northern Ireland. You will automatically be invited to your nearest screening centre, but this can be changed if required.

The current list of screening centres and directions can be found on the following link: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/abdominal-aortic-aneurysm-screening-locations#toc-2

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www.publichealth.hscni.net

This factsheet provides answers to frequently asked questions about the Northern Ireland Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Programme.

Details

Format

3 pages, A4 factsheet, PDF only

Target group

Men aged 65 and over

Downloads

Attachment

Size

Tags

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- [older people](#)

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