Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

Aneurysms are weak places in the wall of an artery. An aneurysm bulges out like a balloon. The aorta is the main vessel in the chest and abdomen. **An a abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)** is located in the abdomen. The aorta carries blood from your heart to the rest of the body. An aneurysm may be detected by physical exam. Imaging studies such as x-rays, CT, or ultrasound may also be used. Aneurysms usually develop with aging and the build-up of plaque in the artery wall. **You are more likely to develop an aneurysm if you have a family history of aneurysms, if you smoke cigarettes, and or if you have high blood pressure.**

When an abdominal aortic aneurysm is small, it may cause no problems. Those that measure less than 2 inches or 5 cm across may not require immediate surgery. Larger aneurysms are more likely to leak or rupture. **When an aneurysm leaks or ruptures, it is a life-threatening emergency**. Signs of a leaky or ruptured aneurysm include abdominal, flank, or back pain, severe weakness, fainting, and shock. Some people simply feel like their feet are asleep or their legs look pale. Be sure to follow-up with your caregiver as recommended so your AAA may be properly monitored.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop severe abdominal, flank or back pain
- You pass out or become light headed
- You suddenly become weak, pale, or sweaty.
- You develop pain in your legs, your legs lose their color or you cannot move them.
- You develop blood in your stools.
- You develop blood in your urine.

Document Released: 12/18/2006 Document Re-Released: 10/15/2010
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