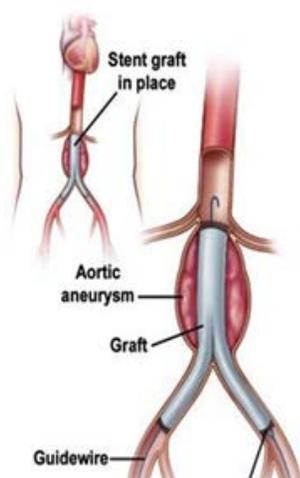


# Information for patients

## Endoluminal abdominal artery aneurysm (AAA) repair

### What is an endoluminal AAA repair?

An endoluminal AAA repair is an operation to correct a balloon-like bulge (aneurysm) in the major blood vessel (aorta) that runs through the abdomen. The wall of the aorta becomes weak due to vascular (blood vessel) disorders, heart disease or high blood pressure. The weakened artery slowly expands over time causing the balloon-like bulge.



If left untreated, the wall of the aorta will continue to stretch to the point where it will burst causing internal bleeding.

### What happens before my surgery?

Before surgery, some patients attend a pre-admission clinic where the doctor will explain the surgery and you will sign a consent form.

At the clinic, the health care team will ask you about your health, medication and lifestyle. They may test your blood, take x-rays and an electrocardiogram (ECG).

Your doctor will talk to you about what medications to take before you come to hospital.

It is important to tell your doctor if you are taking any blood thinning medications, such as aspirin, warfarin or clopidogrel (Plavix).

Please bring your medications into hospital with you.

If you use a dosette box or pill organiser to take your tablets, please ask your pharmacist to print out a list of your current medications so you can bring this to hospital.

If you do not need to attend the pre-admission clinic, we will telephone you to tell you when your surgery is scheduled and what to bring to hospital. You may also receive a letter informing you of your time and date of surgery. Please make sure you confirm your date for surgery.

The day before your surgery, the hospital will call you between 2.30pm and 7pm to inform you of the time you need to stop eating and drinking and what time to come to hospital.

### What will happen on the day of my surgery?

We ask that you shower before you come to hospital and remove jewellery, make up, nail polish and fake nails. It is advised that you leave valuables such as jewellery and large sums of money at home to decrease the possibility of items being misplaced or stolen.

On the day of your surgery, please make your way to the St Vincent's Day of Surgery Admission (DOSA) area, which is located on the first floor of the In-patient Services Building, Princes Street, Fitzroy.

When you arrive the nursing staff will check your pulse and blood pressure.

You will need an anaesthetic for your surgery. The anaesthetist (the doctor who will give you the anaesthetic) will meet with you before your surgery to talk to you about your health and the best anaesthetic for you.

A general anaesthetic (anaesthetic that puts you to sleep) is usually used for this surgery.

St Vincent's is a busy hospital so please be aware that you may need to wait up to three hours for your operation.

### What happens during the surgery?

Two incisions are made in your groin area to access the arteries in the upper thigh. A stent (a tiny expandable stainless steel tube) attached to a graft of blood vessels (vascular graft) is then inserted into the aorta and attached to the walls by expanding the stent.

The stent is left in the aorta to prevent blood circulating in the aneurysm. This operation takes approximately three to four hours.

### What happens after the surgery?

You will wake up from the anaesthetic in the recovery room and be transferred to your ward shortly after.

A nurse will monitor your blood pressure, pulse and temperature. Regular checks will be done on your groin to ensure there is no bleeding or swelling, as well as checking the blood circulation to your feet.

You may have an oxygen mask to help you breathe and an intravenous (IV) drip in your arm giving you fluid. This will be removed once you are able to eat and drink. You will be allowed to eat and drink about four hours after surgery.

You will have dressings on your groin area that may be blood stained. To reduce the risk of bleeding from your groin area, you will need to remain in a flat position for four to six hours from the time you arrive in the recovery room.

Your pain may be treated in a number of ways. This will be decided by you and your doctors and nurses depending on the location and the type of pain you have. You may be given tablets or an injection by a nurse to help you feel better.

Before you go home a CAT scan will be arranged to check the position of your new stent. Most patients have dissolvable stitches. If you have non-dissolvable stitches they will be removed seven days after surgery by your GP.

### When can I go home?

You will be required to stay in hospital for three to five days. Patients are usually discharged at 10am so the room can be prepared for another patient.

Before you leave the ward someone will:

- make a follow-up appointment at St Vincent's Specialist Clinics for you
- send a letter from the hospital to your local doctor (GP)
- give you medication, if the doctor prescribes it
- give you a medical certificate if needed (you will need to ask).

Please remember to take all your belongings including x-rays home with you.

### What should I do once I get home?

Your doctor may recommend two to three weeks off work after the operation to give your body the best chance of recovery.

Shower or wash daily. Wash your wound area with mild soap and pat it dry with a towel.

Do not smoke, as this will slow the healing of the wound.

For your safety, do not drive for six weeks.

Avoid doing any strenuous activity, especially lifting anything heavy (lift no more than 2-3kgs, which is roughly the weight of a bag of oranges) for four to six weeks. You should also avoid sport for four to six weeks.

It is recommended to take gentle walks three to four times a week and to maintain a healthy lifestyle including a low fat, low salt diet.

If you notice any discharge, swelling, hardness or redness on or around your wound or if your feet become cold, numb or change colour go to the nearest emergency department or your local GP as soon as possible.

### Contacts

#### Liaison Nurse

Tel: 9288 4853

#### Waiting List Officer

Tel: 9288 2270

This information sheet is intended as a guideline only. If you have further questions or concerns, please speak to your doctor.