Endovascular Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Surgery

The aorta
The aorta is the largest artery in the body. It is also the most important blood vessel. If there is a problem with your aorta or arteries, the blood flow to the rest of your body is decreased. An aortic aneurysm is a weakened part of the artery. It looks like a bulge or balloon in the wall of the vessel. It can occur in the part of the aorta that is in the chest or in the abdomen. In the abdomen, it is called an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). If the aneurysm bursts or tears, it can cause life-threatening bleeding.

Symptoms of aneurysm— you may not have any symptoms but these may be present:
- Back or abdominal pain
- Pulsating feeling in abdomen
- Discolored feet

Endovascular AAA surgery
During endovascular AAA surgery, two small incisions are made in the groin area and a small catheter is inserted into the artery. The surgeon inserts a small stent-like device into the artery. Using a machine like an X-ray, the doctor watches the image of the thin, tube-shaped device (graft) as it is threaded up the artery. Once it reaches the aneurysm, the device expands and in effect provides a new wall for the artery.

What can I expect while in the hospital?
- You will have an IV until you are able to drink liquids.
- You may have an IV in an artery to watch your blood pressure.
- You may have a catheter to drain urine from your bladder.
- The nurse will help you to get out of bed as soon as you are ready.
- You will be taught how to use an incentive spirometer to prevent pneumonia.
- Plan to go home the day after surgery.
How do I take care of myself when I go home?

Care of your incision
You may get your incision wet in the shower. Do not swim or take tub baths until told by your doctor. Clean the area gently with mild soap and water and remove any dried drainage. Groin incisions should be covered with a Band-Aid. Be sure your incision is dry before you apply the Band-Aid. It is very important to keep groin incisions dry. Do not use any lotions, alcohol, or powders until told by your doctor.

Look at your wound every day. Call your doctor or the vascular clinic if you notice any signs of infection. These signs include:

- An increase in redness or warmth at the incision site
- Red streaks that start at the stitches or staples
- New drainage from your wound (drainage may be foul-smelling, cloudy, yellow, or green)
- Bulging or increased swelling at the incision site
- A temperature more that 101.5°F (38.5°C) by mouth for two readings taken 4 hours apart
- A sudden increase in pain at your wound that is not relieved by your pain medicine

Activity
At the time of discharge, you should resume a number of your basic daily routines. You will need to allow yourself time for rest as you will tire easily. You may feel weaker. This is normal. Your strength and energy level will increase as your body heals.

There are some things that you should avoid in the first few weeks after surgery. These include:

- Do not lift more than 5-10 pounds during the first 2 weeks at home. One gallon of milk is about 8 pounds. This includes groceries, pets, and children.
- Do not drive until your doctor says it is okay. In most cases this will not be until after the first clinic visit. Do not drive while taking narcotic pain medicine.
- Ask your doctor at your follow-up visit when you may return to work and resume sexual activity.

Pain control
It is normal to have some pain after surgery. The pain will decrease as the incision heals. Your doctor has prescribed pain medicine for you to use at home. As you heal, you should need less pain medicine. You may then wish to use an over the counter pain reliever. Talk to your doctor before starting. It may interfere with other medicines you are taking. Do not drive while taking narcotic pain medicine.
Narcotic pain medicine can make you constipated. Use over the counter stool softeners as needed. Drink plenty of fluids and eat high fiber foods. Fruits and vegetables (prunes, raisins, apples, oranges, potatoes, spinach, and carrots) and whole grain breads or rice have fiber. Staying active also helps prevent constipation.

**Diet**
You may have loss of appetite and even lose weight. You should still try to eat because a healthy diet helps your body heal.

You should also drink enough fluid to stay hydrated. Dehydration can make you feel more tired and weak. Drink at least 8 to 10 eight-ounce glasses of fluid each day.

**Leg swelling**
As you become more active, your legs may become more swollen. If this happens, elevate your legs when sitting. Your doctor may want you to wear anti-embolism stockings or ace bandages when you go home. These help reduce swelling and return blood to the heart. Apply them before walking. If you wear ace bandages, they should be wrapped snugly from toe to knee. Your nurse will show you how to wrap them. Remove them when you go to bed.

**Smoking**
Try to quit smoking. Smoking delays wound healing. It decreases blood flow, shrinks arteries, and can raise your blood pressure. If you would like help quitting, call the Quit Line: **1-800-QUITNOW (784-8669)**.

**Follow up**
You will have a phone call from a Vascular Surgery Nurse Practitioner about 2 weeks after you go home. You will be seen in the Vascular Surgery Clinic about 4 weeks after you go home.

**When to call your doctor**
You should look at your incision for signs of infection or breakdown two times each day. Please call the doctor if you have:

- Signs of infection at the incision.
- Open spots between the stitches where the skin is pulling apart.
- If you notice the skin along the incision is getting darker or turning black.
- Cold or discolored legs.
- Numbness, tingling, or loss of movement in your legs or feet.
- A sudden increase in pain that is not relieved by your pain medicine.
- A sudden increase in tenderness or swelling in your leg.
- A temperature of more than 101.5° F (38.5° C) by mouth for two readings taken 4 hours apart.
Phone numbers
Vascular Surgery Clinic
(608) 263-8915
8:00 am to 5:00 pm
Monday through Friday.

After hours and on weekends, call
(608) 263-6400. Ask for the Vascular
Surgery doctor on call. Give your name
and phone number with area code. The
doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, call 1-800-323-8942.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any
questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical
advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are
different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an
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