Endovascular aneurysm sealing for abdominal aortic aneurysm

Information for the public
Published: TBC
nice.org.uk

What has NICE said?

There is not much good evidence about how well this procedure works or how safe it is in the longer term. It should only be used if extra care is taken to explain the risks and extra steps are put in place to record and review what happens.

What does this mean for me?

Your health professional should fully explain what is involved in having this procedure and discuss the possible benefits and risks with you. In particular, they should explain the uncertainty about the evidence on how likely it is to prevent aneurysm rupture and possible complications. You should also be told how to find more information about the procedure. You should only be asked if you want this procedure after having this discussion. Your health professional should ask you if details of your procedure can be collected.

In an emergency, healthcare professionals may give treatment immediately, without obtaining your informed consent, when it is in your best interests.

The condition

An abdominal aortic aneurysm is a swelling of part of the aorta, inside the abdomen. The aorta is the largest artery (blood vessel) in the body. The swelling happens because there is a weakness in
the wall of the aorta. Aneurysms may leak or burst (rupture), causing internal bleeding and possibly death. If a large aneurysm is detected, then treatment is often advised to prevent rupture.

NICE has looked at using endovascular aneurysm sealing as a treatment option.

NHS Choices may be a good place to find out more.

The procedure

This procedure is usually done using local anaesthetic. Two stents (metal mesh tubes) are inserted through 2 small cuts in the skin at the groin and placed within the aneurysm. The aneurysm is then sealed off by filling plastic bags attached to the stents with a polymer.

Benefits and risks

When NICE looked at the evidence, it decided that there was not enough evidence to know how safe this procedure is or how well it works in the longer term. The 11 studies that NICE looked at involved a total of 980 patients.

One of the studies of 171 patients showed that none of their aneurysms had ruptured, up to 14 months after the procedure.

The studies showed that the risks of endovascular aneurysm sealing included:

- the aneurysm not being sealed off completely, needing a further procedure to correct
- problems with narrowing or blocking of a stent after the procedure, needing a further procedure or drug treatment
- risk of infection. One patient died after the procedure because of an infection.

NICE was also told about some other possible risks: the aneurysm rupturing during or after the procedure, and blood clots forming around the stents that then block other arteries.

If you want to know more about the studies, see the guidance. Ask your health professional to explain anything you don't understand.
Questions to ask your health professional

- What does the procedure involve?
- What are the benefits I might get?
- How good are my chances of getting those benefits? Could having the procedure make me feel worse?
- Are there alternative procedures?
- What are the risks of the procedure?
- Are the risks minor or serious? How likely are they to happen?
- What care will I need after the procedure?
- What happens if something goes wrong?
- What may happen if I don't have the procedure?

About this information

NICE interventional procedures guidance advises the NHS on the safety of a procedure and how well it works.


Accreditation

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