Understanding NICE guidance

Information for people who use NHS services

Endovascular stent–grafts for abdominal aortic aneurysms

This leaflet is about when endovascular stent–grafts should be used to treat people with abdominal aortic aneurysms in the NHS in England and Wales. It explains guidance (advice) from NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). It is written for people with abdominal aortic aneurysms but it may also be useful for their families or carers or anyone with an interest in the condition.

It does not describe abdominal aortic aneurysms or the treatments in detail – a member of your healthcare team should discuss these with you. You can get more information from the organisations listed on the back page.
This may not be the only possible treatment for abdominal aortic aneurysms. Your healthcare team should talk to you about whether it is suitable for you and about other treatment options available.

What has NICE said?

Endovascular stent–grafts are recommended as a possible treatment for people with abdominal aortic aneurysms if:

- the aneurysm is below their kidney and has not burst,
- surgery is appropriate, and
- the person and their specialist have discussed the risks and benefits of this and other procedures and decided that endovascular stent–grafts are appropriate.

Aneurysm repair using endovascular stent–grafts should only be carried out in specialist centres by staff experienced in treating people with abdominal aortic aneurysms.

Endovascular stent–grafts are not recommended for people whose abdominal aortic aneurysm has burst unless they are taking part in research with the data collected in national databases to help improve patient care.

Abdominal aortic aneurysms

The aorta is the main blood vessel that carries blood away from the heart. An abdominal aortic aneurysm is a ‘bulge’ along the section of the aorta that goes through the abdomen. The bulge (aneurysm) happens because of a weakness in the wall of the aorta. If an aneurysm bursts, it can cause internal bleeding.
Aneurysm repair using endovascular stent–grafts

A stent–graft is a metal tube (stent) covered with a fabric mesh (graft). It is inserted into a blood vessel at the top of the leg and moved to where the aneurysm is. The stent–graft strengthens the blood vessel around the aneurysm and stops it bursting. A stent–graft is called ‘endovascular’ when it is inserted into a blood vessel.

What does this mean for me?

When NICE recommends a treatment, the NHS must make sure it is available to those people it could help, normally within 3 months of the guidance being issued. So, if you have an abdominal aortic aneurysm, and your doctor thinks that an endovascular stent–graft is the right treatment for you, you should be able to have the treatment on the NHS. Please see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance if the treatment is not available.
More information

The organisations below can provide more information and support for people with abdominal aortic aneurysms. NICE is not responsible for the quality or accuracy of any information or advice provided by these organisations.

- British Heart Foundation, 0300 330 3311
  www.bhf.org.uk
- Circulation Foundation, info@circulationfoundation.org.uk
  www.circulationfoundation.org.uk
- Heart UK, 0845 450 5988
  www.heartuk.org.uk

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk) may be a good place to find out more. Your local patient advice and liaison service (usually known as ‘PALS’) may also be able to give you more information and support.

About NICE

NICE produces guidance (advice) for the NHS about preventing, diagnosing and treating medical conditions. The guidance is written by independent experts, including healthcare professionals and people representing patients and carers. They consider the evidence on the disease and treatments, the views of patients and carers and the experiences of doctors, and consider the costs involved. Staff working in the NHS are expected to follow this guidance.

To find out more about NICE, its work and how it reaches decisions, see www.nice.org.uk/aboutguidance

This leaflet and other versions of the guidance aimed at healthcare professionals are available at www.nice.org.uk/TA167

You can order printed copies of this leaflet from NICE publications (phone 0845 003 7783 or email publications@nice.org.uk and quote reference N1803).

We encourage NHS and voluntary organisations to use text from this leaflet in their own information about abdominal aortic aneurysms.