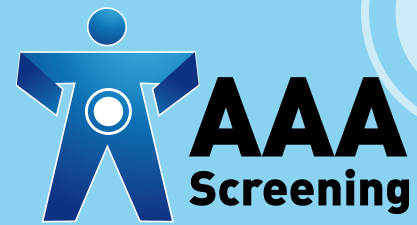


Newsletter of the Northern Ireland Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA) Screening Programme



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Produced by the PHA for healthcare professionals



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We plan to introduce the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme soon. The aim is to reduce AAA-related mortality by providing a systematic, population-based screening programme for men in their 65th year and, on request, for men aged over 65.

Primary care teams will have an important role in relation to

the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme. This will include:

- supporting the programme;
- providing information to eligible men;
- displaying relevant information in surgeries.

A primary care information pack will be distributed before the programme starts.

As a GP, there are also several specific stages throughout the AAA screening process where you may be contacted or involved.

Stage one: Screening test

A letter from the central screening office will be sent to inform you if a patient has refused their first offer of screening (by not attending their appointment or by declining screening during their appointment). Patients

who do not attend their first appointment will receive one further invitation for screening. This letter will inform them that it is their final call for screening, but they can self-refer into the programme at any stage. GPs can play an important role in the process by encouraging their patients to attend for screening.

Stage two: Outcomes

GPs will receive result letters for all screened patients, regardless of screening outcome. The four possible screening outcomes are:

- **Normal:** the aorta has a diameter of less than 30mm. The man is then discharged from the AAA screening programme.
- **Small:** the aorta is slightly enlarged (30–44mm in diameter). The man is invited for surveillance scans once every year to monitor the AAA, and follow-up is carried out by the specialist nurse.
- **Medium:** the aorta is enlarged (45–54mm in diameter). The man is invited for surveillance scans once every three months to monitor the AAA, and follow-up is carried out by the specialist nurse.
- **Large:** the aorta has a diameter in excess of 55mm. The man is referred to a vascular specialist to be assessed and to discuss treatment (see 'Stage three: Referral')

All patients diagnosed with an AAA will also receive the relevant information leaflet.

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GP information packs

A comprehensive information pack will be issued shortly to all GPs across Northern Ireland. This pack will include:

- copies of the four AAA information leaflets;
- a copy of the AAA poster;
- frequently asked questions;
- a professional information sheet;
- screening clinic locations.

GP information sessions

A representative from the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme will be delivering an informative presentation at various GP forum events across the region over the coming months.

Other useful websites

For further information on the screening programme and PDFs of the information leaflets, please visit:
www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications

For general information on AAA screening, please visit:
<http://aaa.screening.nhs.uk/>
www.vascularsociety.org.uk

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Stage three: Referral

In the case of a man with a large AAA, a result letter will be sent to their GP practice, and a follow-up phone call will be made to ensure the practice is aware of the referral. The letter will explain that a referral has been made to the Royal Victoria Hospital Vascular Unit for assessment and discussion of treatment options.

Upon receiving notification of the referral, the GP will be asked to provide additional patient information, including routine background medical information, to the vascular unit. The GP should do this by sending a standard referral letter (MDS4 GP letter format) to the Royal Victoria Hospital Vascular Unit.

If a patient with a large AAA declines referral to the vascular unit, the GP will be informed immediately by phone call (and follow-up letter).

Stage four: Surveillance

A letter will only be sent to inform the GP about the following:

- any surveillance patients who do not attend their monitoring appointment (one further invitation will be sent to those men who don't attend their first surveillance appointment – this will be done after the central screening office has contacted the GP practice to check patient contact details etc);
- a patient's discharge from the AAA screening programme when:
 - a) three consecutive scans show an aortic diameter of less than 30mm where the initial scan showed 30mm or more, or
 - b) 15 consecutive scans at one year intervals show the aortic diameter is still below 45mm.

Stage five: Outcome

Following surgery to repair a large AAA, the patient will be given a discharge letter for his GP.

Letter to GPs from Clinical Lead for AAA screening in Northern Ireland

Dear colleague,

After many months of preparation and planning, the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme will start this summer.

Screening technicians have recently been appointed by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. They will complete their training in early June. All eligible men will receive an invitation to be screened in the (financial) year they turn 65. The first invitations will hopefully go out at the end of May and we expect the first men to be screened the week commencing Monday 18 June, although the exact start date is still subject to change at this point.

As Lead Clinician and Chairman of the Secondary Care and Vascular Network Sub-Group for the project, I have responsibility for developing the vascular network that will look after your patients diagnosed with an AAA.

You may already be aware of the current recommendations from the Vascular Society of Great Britain and Ireland (VSGBI) regarding the criteria for centres performing AAA repair. These criteria were outlined in the AAA Quality Improvement Framework

and, more recently, in *The provision of vascular services 2012* document.

We have discussed these important quality improvement strategies at our local society (NIVASC) over the last year and recognised that the Vascular Unit in the Belfast Trust is the only provider in Northern Ireland that currently meets the criteria recommended by VSGBI.

All screened men diagnosed with an AAA requiring intervention will therefore be referred to the Belfast Trust for further assessment and treatment. As their GP, you will be informed of this referral.

If you have any queries or comments about the introduction of AAA screening in Northern Ireland, please email Mrs Jacqueline McDevitt, Project Manager, at: jacqueline.mcdevitt@hscni.net

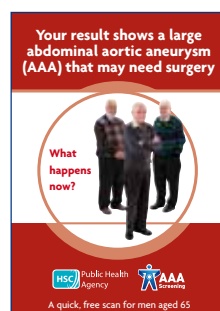
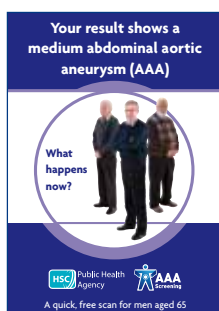
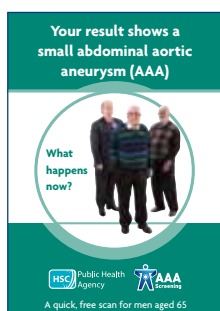
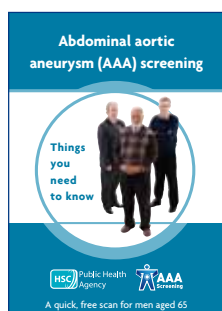
Yours sincerely



Mr Paul Blair
Clinical Lead for AAA screening

AAA screening programme materials finalised

An invitation leaflet and three results leaflets have now been produced for the Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme. The results leaflets are for men diagnosed with a small, medium or large AAA. The invitation leaflet will be sent out to eligible men with the letter inviting them to screening. The relevant result leaflet will be given to men directly after their scan. Additional copies of the invitation leaflet will be included in the GP information pack for any men who enquire about screening. However, as per the guidance in the leaflet, any men who want to self-refer for a scan must contact the AAA central screening office directly. A copy of each of the results leaflets and the AAA poster will also be included in the GP information pack.



A quick, free scan for all men aged 65

Did you know?
Around 1 in 40 men aged 65 have an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA)

All men in Northern Ireland in their 65th year will receive an invitation for an ultrasound scan that looks for swelling in the aorta (AAA).

This can be life-threatening if left untreated. Look out for your invite in the post. Men over 65 can request a scan through the central screening office on 028 9063 1928. For further information, contact your GP or visit www.publichealth.hscni.net

HSC Public Health Agency | DHSSPS Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety | AAA Screening

Public Health Agency, Ormeau Avenue Unit, 18 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8PL. Tel: 028 9031 1811. Telephone Text Relay: 18001 028 9031 1811. www.publichealth.hscni.net

Recent appointments

Wendy Thornton, Manager for Vascular Managed Clinical Network and Long-Term Conditions

Wendy took up her post on 22 February 2012. Her background is in modernisation and efficiency, and she has held a number of project management posts across various health and social services organisations. Wendy's key area of responsibility is to provide project management support and expertise in the development of a managed clinical network for vascular services in Northern Ireland.

She will work with all those involved in the provision of vascular services across the region to improve patient care.

Helen McCann, Administrative Assistant, Northern Ireland AAA Screening Programme

Helen has recently joined the AAA screening team as an administrative assistant. Helen's responsibilities include organising the various AAA screening project team and sub-group meetings, as well as providing other essential administrative functions and services to the AAA screening project manager.

Feedback and suggestions

We would welcome any comments or feedback on this newsletter.

If there are any topics you would like us to cover in future issues, please email Jacqueline McDevitt at: jacqueline.mcdevitt@hscni.net

The newsletter will be published three times a year.

Key contacts

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