

Open Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Repair (AAA Repair)

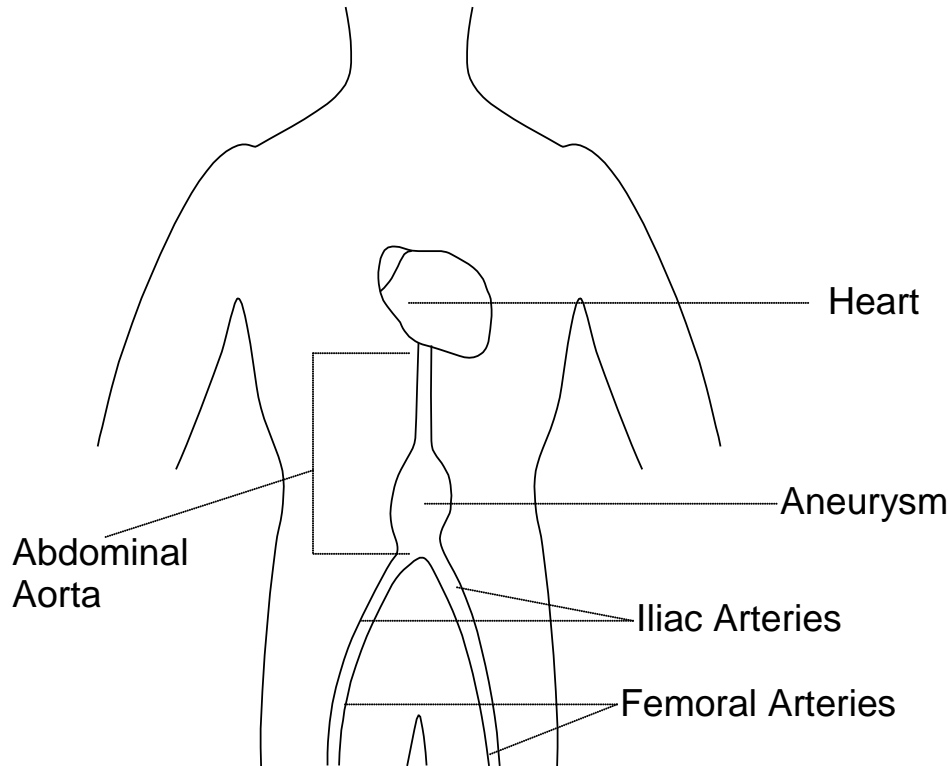
You are about to have your abdominal aortic aneurysm repaired.

This handout gives you information:

- about your aneurysm
 - what to expect from surgery
 - how to prepare for it
 - what to expect after surgery
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What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm?

The aorta is the main pipe that carries blood from your heart to the rest of your body. An aneurysm occurs when part of this pipe has weakened and ballooned out.



Your surgeon has told you that your aneurysm has now reached a size that needs to be repaired.

What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm repair?

There are 2 ways to repair an aneurysm. One way is getting to the aneurysm through the inside of your arteries, called an endovascular aneurysm repair (EVAR). “Endo” means “inside”. The other way involves surgery with an incision through the middle of your abdomen. This is called an open aortic abdominal repair.

You and your surgeon have decided that an **open abdominal aortic aneurysm repair** is the best choice for you.

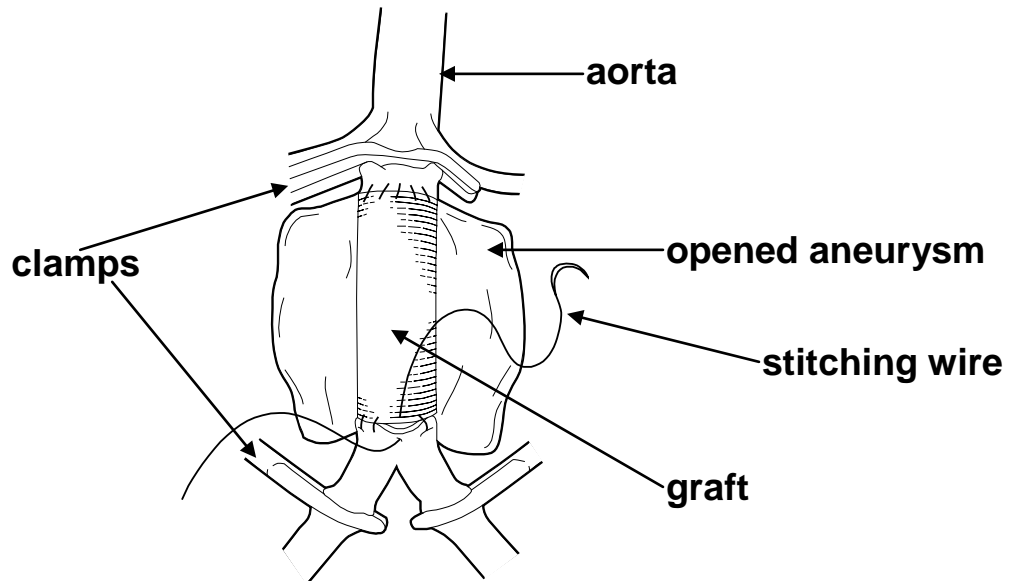
How is an open abdominal aortic aneurysm repair done?

You will be given a general anesthetic that will put you to sleep during the surgery. You will also receive an epidural catheter. This is a thin tube placed into a small space in your back that will deliver pain medication. This will also be used to keep you comfortable after the surgery.

During the surgery, the doctor makes an incision in your abdomen in order to see the aneurysm. Clamps are placed above and below the aneurysm to stop the blood flow through the aneurysm.

The aneurysm sac is opened and a graft is sewn into the aorta.

The graft is made of a material called Dacron[®]. Once the graft is sewn in place the clamps are removed. The aneurysm sac is closed around the graft and stitched.



How long does the surgery take?

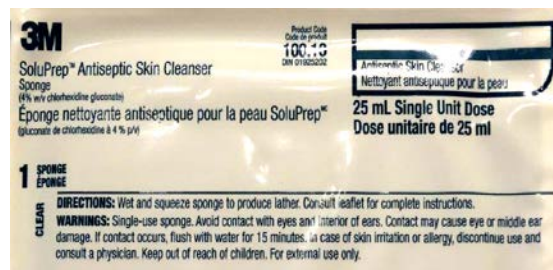
This surgery usually takes 2 to 4 hours. You will be able to go home in 5 to 7 days.

Before your surgery

You will attend the Pre-Op Clinic at the West End Clinic, 690 Main Street West, Hamilton, about 1 week before your surgery.

At this visit you will:

- Have blood work, an electrocardiogram (ECG) and a chest x-ray.
- See a nurse who will take your health history and go over your medications with you. **Please bring all medications in their original containers with you to this appointment.**
- Meet with an anesthesiologist who will explain the type of anaesthetic used for your surgery.
- Receive information about what time to come to the Hamilton General Hospital and what medications to take at home before you come in.
- You will need to buy 2 packages of chlorhexidine scrub sponges.
 - One package for the **night before** your surgery.
 - One package for the **morning of** your surgery.
- You can buy the sponges at the Hamilton General Hospital Pharmacy and the West End Urgent Care Centre, 690 Main Street West, Hamilton (same building where your Pre-op Clinic appointment was).



- Never use the sponge near your eyes.
- Once you have completed the scrub, rinse the soap solution off your body completely.
- Pat yourself dry with a clean freshly washed towel. **DO NOT** apply any powders, deodorants or lotions.
- Dress with freshly washed clothes.

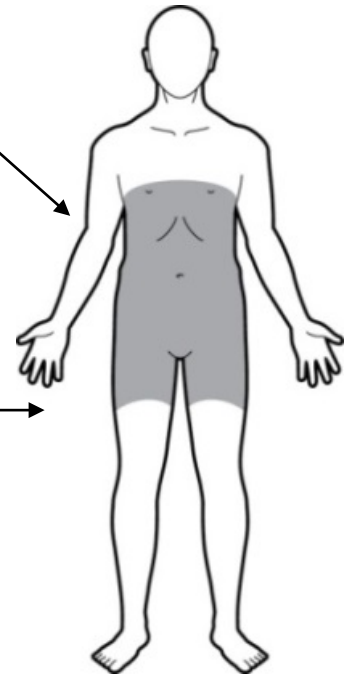


The night before your surgery

- Wash and rinse your hair using your normal shampoo. Make sure you completely rinse the shampoo from your hair and body.
- Wash your body with regular soap. Make sure you completely rinse off the soap from your body.
- Now begin using one of the scrub sponges that you purchased.
- Wash the shaded area as shown on the diagram. Avoid scrubbing your skin too hard.

The morning of your surgery

- Wash your body again with regular soap, as you did the night before.
- Using the 2nd scrub brush, wash the shaded area of your body again, as you did the night before.



The day of your surgery

- Please bring a housecoat and non-slip slippers with you to the hospital. Your family can bring anything else you may need after your surgery.
- Remove contact lenses, nail polish, earrings and all other jewellery.

All types of body jewellery need to be removed:

- all rings – including wedding rings
 - necklaces
 - bangles
 - toe rings
 - barbells
 - labrets
 - earrings
 - watches
 - captive bead rings
 - chains
 - bracelets
 - religious medals
- When you get to the hospital, go to the Patient Registration on the main level. From there you will be taken to Same Day Surgery.
 - In Same Day Surgery you will be asked to change into a hospital gown. An intravenous (IV) line will be started in your arm. The IV is used to give you fluids and medications.
 - You will meet the anesthesiologist who is assisting with the surgery. From there you will be taken into the Operating Room.

Where can my family wait?

Your family can wait in the waiting rooms outside the Operating Room on the 3rd floor.

During your surgery

In the Operating Room you will meet the nurses who will be providing help during the surgery. They will position you on the operating table.

Your skin will be cleaned with a special solution and you will be covered with special drapes and blankets. Tell the nurses if you are uncomfortable.

If you are having an epidural it will be put in at this time.

During surgery you will be asleep.

A tube will be placed through your nostril and down into your stomach to drain fluids during the surgery and for a period of time after you wake up.

Often after this surgery your intestinal tract takes time to start working normally again.

The tube will remain in your nose until your intestinal tract begins to work normally again.

After your surgery

After surgery you will be taken to the Post-Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU) or Recovery Room for a couple of hours. From there you will be taken to 4 West.

If you have other health concerns you may be taken to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for 1 or 2 days after surgery before returning to 4 West.

The nurses will take your blood pressure and check your incision a number of times throughout the night. They will also check the circulation in your feet. You will still have an IV line in your arm.

The nurses will monitor your heart rate and rhythm. Blood work will be drawn on a regular basis for a couple of days to monitor your recovery.

You may also have a tube in your nose to drain your stomach. This may cause you to have a sore throat.

Your diet will slowly be increased from clear fluids to solids as your intestinal tract returns to normal.

You may have an epidural in for up to 3 days to help manage your pain. If you don't have an epidural you will receive an IV medication or pills to help control your pain.

Let your nurse know if you have any pain or discomfort.

A physiotherapist will see you every day. You will begin getting out of bed and walking around the first day after surgery.

You will have clips in the incision in your abdomen and the nurses will change the dressing daily or as needed. Your surgeon or your family doctor will remove these clips about 2 weeks after the date of your surgery.

When you are at home

When you get home:

- Go for a walk each day.
- Do not lift or push anything over 4.5 kilograms or 10 pounds for the next 4 to 6 weeks – this includes children, pets, groceries, laundry and weights.p
- Do not drive until you have seen your surgeon. Your surgeon will then tell you when it is safe for you to drive.
- You can shower but do not soak in the tub until after your clips have been removed.



You will begin to feel like your normal self within 6 to 8 weeks from the time of surgery depending on your level of health before surgery.

What are the signs of infection?

Signs of infection are:

- redness or heat along the incision
- green, yellow or white drainage from your incision
- opening of your incision
- fever of 38.5°C or 100°F and chills, with any type of drainage from your incision



If you have any signs of infection, call your family doctor or go to an Urgent Care Centre right away.

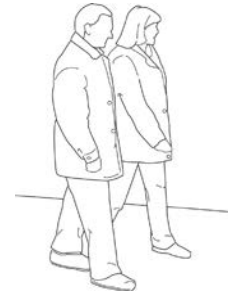
Pain medication

You will be given a prescription for pain medication. Sometimes these medications cause constipation.



Tips to prevent constipation at home:

- Drink at least 1½ to 2 litres or 6 to 8 cups of water a day. This will help you to have a soft stool.
- People with heart failure should not drink a lot of fluids. Talk to your doctor, nurse or ask to see a dietitian. They can help you find ways to treat your constipation that is safe for you.
- Exercise and activity help your bowels to keep moving. Walking is a good way to increase activity.
- Adding fibre to your diet is a good way to prevent or treat constipation. Foods that have fibre include whole grain breads and cereals, bran, fresh fruit, vegetables and legumes (peas, beans and lentils).



Call your family doctor or pharmacist if you have questions or concerns about constipation or how to treat it at home.

When should I see my doctors for follow-up?

- You will need to see your surgeon or family doctor 2 weeks after surgery to have the clips taken out of your incisions.
- If your surgeon removes your clips you may want to see your family doctor within a month of surgery so that he or she can keep updated on your progress.
- If your family doctor removes your clips you will be given an appointment to see your surgeon about one month after surgery.
- Your surgeon will decide at your first visit when he or she will see you again in follow-up.



Notes/Questions



