

Health technology assessment of abdominal aortic aneurysm screening for men

What is this report about?

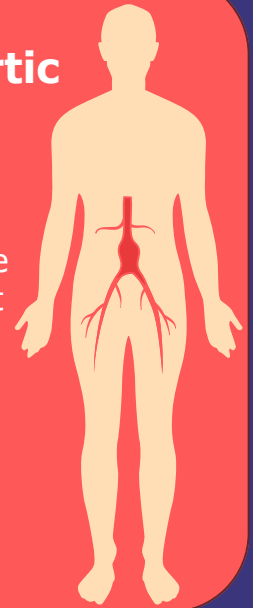
This assessment was completed at the request of the National Screening Advisory Committee (NSAC) to help inform its recommendation on whether to introduce an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening programme for men in Ireland.



What is an abdominal aortic aneurysm?

An AAA is a swelling of the abdominal aorta. The aorta carries blood from the heart to the rest of the body. AAA rupture can be life-threatening. Most AAAs do not cause any symptoms before rupture.

The risk of AAA is higher with increasing age and is particularly high in men. Screening can help to detect AAAs earlier and facilitate timely access to surgery to prevent rupture.



Challenges

Introduction of an AAA screening programme would be challenging due to:

- staff shortages in radiology and vascular surgery
- limited national data, including the total number of AAA cases identified currently, and limitations in ICT infrastructure
- uncertainty regarding the long-term clinical and cost effectiveness of screening.

As the number of people with an AAA falls, the resources needed to set up a formal screening programme must be weighed against other healthcare interventions that may need to be delayed, scaled back or deprioritised to make AAA screening possible.

Dr Máirín Ryan

Assessment Findings

AAA is becoming less common internationally and in Ireland.

AAAs are increasingly being detected during imaging for other reasons, reducing the need for screening. Screening still offers benefits, but its clinical and economic value is expected to continue declining.

