

Cardiovascular Specialists of Frederick

Patient Information form: Ultrasound Aorta

Definition of Abdominal Aorta ultrasound:

Abdominal ultrasound is an imaging procedure used to examine abdomen. The blood vessels that lead to some of these organs can also be looked at with ultrasound.

How the test is performed:

An ultrasound machine creates images that allow various organs in the body to be examined. The machine sends out high-frequency sound waves, which reflect off body structures to create a picture. A computer receives these reflected waves and uses them to create a picture. Unlike with x-rays or CT scans, there is no ionizing radiation exposure with this test.

You will be lying down for the procedure. A clear, water-based conducting gel is applied to the skin over the abdomen. This helps with the transmission of the sound waves. A handheld probe called a transducer is then moved over the abdomen.

You may be asked to change position so that the health care provider can examine different areas. You may also be asked to hold your breath for short periods of time during the examination.

The procedure usually takes less than 30 minutes for screening and 1 Hour for the Full Aorta scan.

How to prepare for the test:

Patients are asked to not eat or drink for 8 hours before the examination.

How the test will feel:

There is little discomfort. The conducting gel may feel slightly cold and wet.

Definition of Abdominal aortic aneurysm:

An abdominal aortic aneurysm is when the large blood vessel that supplies blood to the abdomen, pelvis, and legs becomes abnormally large or balloons outward.

Causes, incidence, and risk factors:

The exact cause is unknown, but risk factors for developing an aortic aneurysm include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Male gender
- Emphysema
- Genetic factors
- Obesity

An abdominal aortic aneurysm can develop in anyone, but is most often seen in males over 60 who have one or more risk factors. The larger the aneurysm, the more likely it is to rupture and break open.

Symptoms:

Aneurysms develop slowly over many years and often have no symptoms. If an aneurysm expands rapidly, tears open (ruptured aneurysm), or blood leaks along the wall of the vessel (aortic dissection), symptoms may develop suddenly.

Signs and tests:

Your doctor will examine your abdomen. The exam also will include an evaluation of pulses and feeling in your legs.

You may have an abdominal aortic aneurysm that is not causing any symptoms or problems. Your doctor may find this problem by doing the following test.