

NHS abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening: information for trans and non-binary people

AAA screening for trans people at a glance

- Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are registered with a GP as female are not routinely invited for abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA) screening but can request screening.
- Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth who are registered with a GP as male are invited for AAA screening.
- Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who are registered with a GP as female are not invited for AAA screening.
- Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth who are registered with a GP as male are invited for AAA screening but do not have a high risk of AAA

AAA screening

AAA screening is a free NHS test that is carried out in the community, including hospitals, health clinics and GP practices.

AAA screening involves a simple ultrasound scan to measure the abdominal aorta.

The aorta is the main blood vessel that supplies blood to the body. Sometimes the wall of the aorta in the abdomen can become weak and stretch to form an abdominal aortic aneurysm (AAA). There is a risk that an AAA may split or tear (rupture).

There is a high risk of dying from a ruptured AAA. Finding an aneurysm early gives you the best chance of treatment and survival. AAA screening reduces your risk of dying from a ruptured AAA.

Taking part in AAA screening is your choice. You can find out more information about AAA screening from your GP or by visiting www.nhs.uk/aaa or www.gov.uk/aaa-screening-leaflet.

AAA screening invitation process

AAAs are far more common in men aged over 65 than in women and younger men. That's why the NHS AAA Screening Programme only invites for screening

individuals registered as male. However, any trans woman will have the same risk as a man and should consider accessing screening.

Individuals registered as male are invited for an ultrasound scan to check the size of their abdominal aorta when they are 65.

Individuals over 65 can request a scan by contacting their local AAA screening service directly. Visit www.nhs.uk/aaa for contact details.

If you are trans it is important that your GP contacts the NHS AAA Screening Programme so you are invited for screening correctly. If you do not want to be invited for AAA screening, you will need to let us know.

If you are not sure if you should be screened or not, contact your local screening office. You will find your local screening office number and more information about clinic locations on www.nhs.uk/aaa.

Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth

Trans men and non-binary people assigned female at birth do not have the same risk of AAA as people assigned male at birth.

Registered with a GP as female

If you are registered with a GP as female, you will not be invited for AAA screening.

Registered with a GP as male

If you are a trans man aged 65 who is registered with a GP as male, you will be sent an appointment to attend for AAA screening. You can have AAA screening if you wish even though your risk is lower. If the clinic location or appointment time is not suitable, you can contact your local screening office to change this. You will find your local screening office phone number on your invitation letter.

Trans women and non-binary people assigned male at birth

Registered with a GP as female

If you are registered with a GP as female, you will not be invited for screening. However, if you are 65, you will have the same risk as a man aged 65 and should consider accessing screening. You can contact us to arrange a suitable appointment. Visit www.nhs.uk/aaa for contact details.

Registered with a GP as male

If you are aged 65 and registered with a GP as male, you will be invited for AAA screening.

Any trans woman or non-binary person assigned male at birth will have the same AAA risk as a man and should consider accessing screening.

AAA screening test

The test is a simple ultrasound scan of your abdomen to measure the size of the aorta. Your screening appointment usually takes about 10 to 15 minutes.

The screener will check your personal details and ask for your consent (permission) to do the ultrasound scan.

You will be asked to lie on your back and lift up your top. You will not need to undress completely. If you are wearing a binder, you may be asked to remove it.

The ultrasound scan is usually painless. It can be slightly uncomfortable as the screener may need to apply some pressure.

AAA screening results

The screener will give you your results following your scan.

It is not always possible to see your aorta at your screening test so you may be referred to hospital.

If your aorta is found to be bigger than normal, you will need regular scans to check if it is growing. Some people never need surgery for their AAA.

If your AAA is large you will be referred to a specialist team to discuss planned surgery. Large AAAs can be treated successfully with surgery.

Reducing your risk

Consider taking part in AAA screening and follow-up when you are invited.

You should also consider:

- stopping smoking
- drinking less alcohol

It is also important to maintain a healthy weight through a healthy diet and physical activity.