

## ANEURYSM

An aneurysm is an abnormal widening or ballooning of a portion of an artery because of weakness in the wall of the blood vessel.

### Cause

It is not clear what exactly causes aneurysms. Some aneurysms are present at birth. Others may also be because of defects in the artery wall.

### Common Locations

- The major artery from the heart (the aorta)
- The brain (cerebral aneurysm)
- In the leg behind the knee popliteal artery aneurysm)
- Intestine (mesenteric artery aneurysm)
- An artery in the spleen (splenic artery aneurysm)

### Risk Factors

- High blood pressure (especially in abdominal aortic aneurysm)
- High cholesterol
- Cigarette smoking
- Pregnancy (in splenic artery aneurysm)

### Signs and Symptoms

- Pain and swelling with throbbing mass (if aneurysm occurs near the body's surface)
  - Pain
  - Low blood pressure
  - Rapid heart rate
  - Lightheadedness
- } if aneurysm ruptures

\*\*\* Aneurysms within the body or brain often cause no symptoms.

### Diagnosis

- Physical examination
- Computed tomography (CT) scan
- Ultrasound

## Treatment

\*\*\* Surgery is generally recommended. The type of surgery depends on the symptoms, type, and size of the aneurysm.

## Prevention

- Control of high blood pressure
- Healthy diet
- Regular exercise
- Smoking

## QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever experienced taking care of a patient with aneurysm? If yes, what signs and symptoms did the patient manifest? If no, how will you know that a patient has an aneurysm?
2. You have a patient who has an aneurysm. He always tells you how afraid he is knowing that the aneurysm might rupture. What will you say to him to make him feel better?
3. A patient who is diagnosed with an aneurysm is discharged from the hospital. What discharge instructions should you give to the patient? Briefly explain the reason behind each instruction. Give 2 answers.