

Rodney Wants Respect...

for abdominal aortic aneurysms (AAA)



Rodney knows AAA is no joking matter.

In 1992 Rodney Dangerfield's doctors discovered something that could have killed him—an abdominal aortic aneurysm. Doctors call it AAA—pronounced “Triple-A.” If you don't have a clue what that is, you're right where Rodney was. When he heard his doctors say “AAA,” he thought of a flat tire.

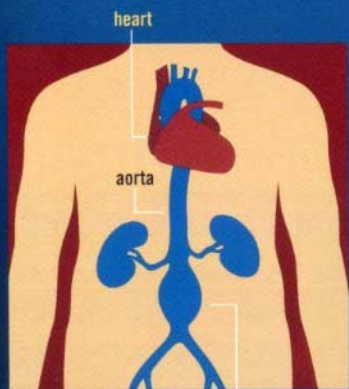
Time for that to change.

They caught Rodney's AAA—and they fixed it. Now he wants you to know that AAA is no joke.

“About 15,000 people die each year from AAA ruptures,” says Rodney. “It's one of our country's top killers. Albert Einstein, Lucille Ball, George C. Scott—they all died from ruptured AAAs.”

What is AAA?

Imagine a weak spot on an old tire. That's what AAA looks like—a bulge in the lower aorta, the main pipeline for blood from the heart to the organs and tissues.



abdominal aortic aneurysm

Why does it happen?

“No one knows,” says Rodney. “But we do know how it happens.”

AAA begins with a weakened spot in the aorta's wall. Over time, the constant pressure of circulating blood can cause the area to swell, just like a balloon. If the aorta gets to 1.5 times its normal size, you've got an abdominal aortic aneurysm.

What if it ruptures?

Many AAAs grow slowly. But as the size increases, so do the odds the aneurysm will rupture. If it does, internal bleeding is so massive that death is the usual outcome.

“Once it bursts, your odds are bad,” says Rodney. In fact, only 20% of AAA rupture victims survive.

What are the symptoms?

AAA is called a “silent killer” because it rarely causes any symptoms.

“Most people don't know they have one until it's discovered by accident—like mine—or it bursts.”

Time for that to change, too.

What can you do?

Adults over 60 have the highest risk of developing AAA. Men are particularly at risk. So is anyone with a close relative who's had AAA.

"And if you're a smoker like I was for 50 years," says Rodney, "your chances of AAA are almost eight times higher than a non-smoker."


If this sounds like you, take control of your health. Talk to your doctor about getting screened for AAA.

AAA screening methods

- Abdominal palpation—
Your doctor feels for the bulge during your physical exam.
- Ultrasound imaging scan—
This quick, non-invasive test is over 80% accurate.

"So show your body some respect," says Rodney. "Get yourself checked for AAA now. And if they find something, it's not bad news—it's good news. You caught it in time."

Once you know you've got an abdominal aortic aneurysm, the threat of sudden death is much lower. Regular ultrasound scans can keep tabs on the aneurysm's size. If it gets large enough that a rupture is likely, AAA can be repaired by safe and effective modern surgery.




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Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm

Rodney's Story

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When Rodney Dangerfield was treated for pancreatitis in 1992, his X-ray revealed something that makes even a comedian get serious—an abdominal aortic aneurysm, commonly abbreviated as AAA (pronounced "Triple-A"). His aorta, the largest artery in the body, had ballooned to nearly twice its normal size.

Thanks to surgery, Rodney has now wisecracked his way to his 80th birthday. In this eye-opening multimedia journey, find out why he thinks this little-known condition should get some respect.

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quick facts about AAA

- 200,000 new cases are diagnosed each year in the United States.
- An estimated 1.5 million Americans currently have an abdominal aortic aneurysm.
- Only 50% of the 1.5 million people with AAAs have been diagnosed.
- AAA is four times more common in men than women.



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