# Free Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm Screening Can Catch a Lurking Killer

re you 60 or older?
Do you smoke? Do
you have heart disease? What about
lung disease? High blood pressure?
If you've answered yes, you could
be at risk for a deadly condition
called an abdominal aortic
aneurysm, also known as AAA.

This type of aneurysm—which typically has no warning signs— occurs when the lining of the abdominal aorta weakens and the artery wall becomes thinner. The damaged blood vessel can then rupture, causing serious and potentially fatal internal bleeding.

The Society for Vascular Surgery estimates that as many as 1 million Americans are living with an undetected AAA; annually nearly 200,000 are diagnosed. That still leaves almost 10 percent who don't receive treatment soon enough.

#### Free screening

To encourage early diagnosis and treatment of abdominal aortic aneurysm, Washington Hospital will host a free screening on Saturday, Jan. 28, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Washington Township Medical Foundation's new Newark Clinic location at 6236 Thornton Avenue in Newark.

Call (800) 963-7070 to preregister for the screening. (Pre-registration is required; walk-ins are not accepted.)

What you should know Approximately 15,000 people in the United States die each year, often arriving too late in the emergency room with a swollen, painful abdomen and suffering from shock due to a ruptured aneurysm. These symptoms often appear suddenly, even in individuals who might have otherwise seemed in good health.

Dr. John Thomas Mehigan, vascular surgeon and medical codirector, Washington Hospital's Vascular Services Program, and Dr. Ash Jain, medical co-director of Washington Hospital's Vascular Services Program, have partnered to perform the AAA screening at Washington Hospital for almost a

According to Dr. Mehigan, a majority of these potentially fatal aneurysms are found by accident, mostly due to the hard-to-reach position of the artery that supplies blood to the abdomen, pelvis, and legs. This makes an abdominal aortic aneurysm very difficult to feel by routine examination, he says.

"The best time to find an abdominal aortic aneurysm is before it ruptures rather than by accident, and that's why we go out and do this screening every year," he explains. "Mostly we find people with small aneurysms, and we want to control their risk factors at this point."

Owing to the relatively asymptomatic nature of abdominal aortic aneurysms, they can go undetected for years, according to Dr. Jain.

"An abdominal aortic aneurysm is a silent killer," says Dr. Jain. "Most of the time the condition goes undiagnosed, and the first occurrence could be fatal. This is why it's important to screen before a rupture occurs."

Fortunately, for those with risk factors or a family history of AAA, the simple screening test being held on Jan. 28 can catch an aneurysm of this type before it bursts and causes a medical emergency.

Dr. Jain describes the free screening as an easy way to detect ruptures before they occur.

"The test is safe, painless and noninvasive and uses ultrasound technology that detects and accurately measures the size of an aneurysm to determine if treatment is needed," according to Dr. Jain. "After we perform the ultrasound testing to look for the presence of an aneurysm, patients have the opportunity to speak with a physician who will explain if they are at risk for an abdominal aortic aneurysm."

#### Are you at risk for AAA?

Since you can't "feel" an aneurysm, it's important to understand medical conditions and lifestyle factors that may be putting you at greater risk.

Risk factors for an abdominal aortic aneurysm include:

- High blood pressure
- Atherosclerosis

- Heart disease
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Family history
   Smoking

"High blood pressure is the major risk factor for AAA," Dr. Jain says. "Mainly, we're looking at community members who are over 50 and have multiple risk factors."

The screening itself is done via a five-minute ultrasound of the stomach used to detect the presence of an aneurysm.

"If we find an aneurysm, anything less than five centimeters can be treated effectively with medications," Dr. Jain says. "In the case of an aneurysm of more than five centimeters in diameter, we will use stents to treat it aggressively."

Dr. Mehigan says the free screening for abdominal aortic aneurysms began in part because it had impacted a prominent member of the community.

"This screening program originally began after I operated on Morris Hyman, the founder of Fremont Bank, because his physician found an aneurysm on an X-ray of his back," he relates. "Morris and I got to be friends, and he talked about how astonished he was that there was this terrible thing wrong with him and yet he had no idea. He said, 'We will pay for a community

screening,' and ever since Fremont Bank has partially funded expenses for the screening."

Dr. Mehigan encourages any individuals who think they—or a loved one—might be at risk due to multiple risk factors listed above to pre-register for the screening.

"Medicare now pays for a onetime screening if you're over the age of 65 because the yield of AAA diagnoses is so high when screened," he notes. "We're pretty proud of the program, and often we find other health risks community members didn't know they had to begin with."

Each person who is screened will meet individually with a physician to discuss the results for free, he says, joking that the one downside is that participants must put off breakfast until after they are screened.

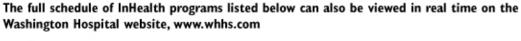
"When you're finished, you get a little snack and you're out of there," says Dr. Mehigan.

Dr. Jain concludes that the screening is the best way to prevent "a health disaster" before it happens.

### Reserve your space

If you think you or a family member might have risk factors for an abdominal aortic aneurysm, call Washington Hospital's Health Connection line at (800) 963-7070 to pre-register for the free screening on Saturday, Jan. 28.

## InHealth broadcasts on Comcast Channel 78 in Fremont, Newark and Union City and online at www.inhealth.tv







	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
	01/17/12	01/18/12	01/19/12	01/20/12	01/21/12	01/22/12	01/23/12
12:00 PM 12:00 AM 12:30 PM 12:30 AM	New Techniques to Treat Back Pain	Movement Disorders, Parkinson's Disease, Tremors and Epilepsy	Maintaining Heart Health with Diabetes	Diabetes Matters: Ins and Outs of Glucose Monitoring	Cancer Caregivers: Panel Discussion	Reach Your Goal: Quit Smoking Voices InHealth:	What You Should Know About Carbs and Food Labels
1:00 PM 1:00 AM 1:30 PM 1:30 AM	Think Pink 2011	Washington Women's Center: Circulation 101 for Women - Part 1: Varicose Veins (Late Start)	Think Pink 2011	Washington Women's Center: Cholesterol and Women	Prostate Enlargements and Cancer	Cyberbullying - The New Schoolyard Bully (Late Start)	Think Pink 2011
2:00 PM 2:00 AM 2:30 PM	Diabetes Matters: Vacation or Travel Plans?		Treatment Options for		Learn How to Access Community Services Quickly and Easily	Diabetes Matters: Diabetes Viewpoint  Partnering with Your	Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting January 11, 2012
2:30 AM 3:00 PM 3:00 AM	Do You Suffer From Breathing Problems? Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease or Asthma	Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting December 14, 2011	Knee Problems  Heel Problems and	Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting December 14, 2011	Men's Health Expo 2011 (Late Start)	Doctor to Improve Diabetes Control	(New)  Insurance Information for People with Diabetes
3:30 PM 3:30 AM						You Should Know About Foot Care (Late Start)	
4:00 PM 4:00 AM 4:30 PM 4:30 AM	Disaster Preparedness	What You Should Know About Carbs and Food Labels	Treatment Options  Learn How to Eat Better!	Minimally Invasive Surgery for Lower Back Disorders	Personal Emergency Healthy Foods Preparedness Training	Washington Women's Center: Heart Healthy Foods	s Osteoporosis Update: Learn About Diagnosis and Treatment Options Women's Health
5:00 PM 5:00 AM 5:30 PM	Minimally Invasive Treatment for Common Gynecologic Conditions Learn About Foods That Help Your Digestive System	Important Immunizations for Healthy Adults	(Late Start)  Women's Health	Living Well with Diabetes: Overcoming Challenges		,	
5:30 AM			Conference: Pain and Rehabilitation		Cataracts and Diabetic Eye Conditions	Inside Washington Hospital:The Green Team	Conference: Pain and Rehabilitation
6:00 PM 6:00 AM 6:30 PM	Crohn's & Colitis, Stomach Cancer and Irritable Bowel Disorders	Diabetes Matters: Diabetes Viewpoint	Influenza and Other Contagious Respiratory Conditions	Voices InHealth: New Surgical Options for Breast Cancer Treatment	Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting January 11, 2012	Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting January 11, 2012	Cancer Caregivers: Mobilizing Resources
6:30 AM 7:00 PM	How to Prevent a Heart Attack			Oh My Aching Lower Back!	(New)	(New)	
7:00 AM 7:30 PM	(Late Start)	Voices InHealth: Decisions in Cardiac Care	Arthritis: Do I Have One	LOWER BACK:	Arthritis: Do I Have One of 100 Types?	Prostate Enlargements and Cancer	Diabetes Management: When to Call for Help Voices InHealth: Medicine Safety for Children
7:30 AM 8:00 PM	Kidney Disease	Sepsis: Treatment of a Top 10 Killer	of 100 Types?	Community Based Senior Supportive Services			
8:00 AM 8:30 PM	Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting December 14, 2011		Washington Township Health Care District Board Meeting December 14, 2011		Cough or Shortness of Breath, What to Do About It	Diabetes Matters: Ins and Outs of Glucose Monitoring	
8:30 AM 9:00 PM		Strengthen Your Back! Learn to Improve Your Back Fitness					
9:00 AM				Your Concerns InHealth: Vitamin Supplements			Salety for Children
9:30 PM 9:30 AM 10:00 PM 10:00 AM	Heart Irregularities	Have You Recently Lost Health Care Coverage?	Surgical Interventions for	Do You Have Sinus Problems?	Osteoporosis Update: Learn About Diagnosis and Treatment Options	Tips to Making Your Golden Years Healthier	Take the Steps:What You Should Know About Foot Care
10:30 PM 10:30 AM			Sleep Apnea  Voices InHealth: Medicine	Learn Exercises to Help Lower Your Blood Pressure		Voices InHealth: Update on the Journey to Magnet	Inside Washington Hospital: Patient Safety
11:00 PM 11:00 AM	Are You at Risk for Diabetes? - Learn the Signs	George Mark Children's House - A New Way Home	Safety for Children (Late Start)	and Slow Your Heart Rate  Diabetes and Your  Hormones	Diabetes Matters:Vacation or Travel Plans?	Disaster Preparedness	Diabetes Matters:Vacation or Travel Plans?
11:30 PM 11:30 AM			Voices InHealth:The Legacy Strength Training Syste		Inside Washington Hospital: Stroke Response Team		