

## Enlarged Aorta

Please note that this is general information - please contact your doctor/111/the Lung health check team if you have any further questions after reading this or looking up the links at the end. If you need this in a different format please call the lung health check team on 01305 255589.

### What is an enlarged aorta?

Your CT scan has shown that the base of your aorta—the main blood vessel that carries blood from your heart—is a bit larger than usual. This could be normal for you, but it might also mean that you have a slightly higher risk of developing a condition called a thoracic aortic aneurysm.

A thoracic aortic aneurysm is when part of the aorta in your chest gets swollen or enlarged. The aorta then continues down into your abdomen, and if that part becomes enlarged, it's called an abdominal aortic aneurysm. To give you an idea of how common this is, out of every 100 people over the age of 65, 1 may have a thoracic aneurysm.

Often, these aneurysms don't cause any symptoms and are discovered incidentally, like yours was, during a CT scan done for another reason. The exact cause of these swellings isn't always clear, but certain factors may increase the chances of them appearing or getting larger. These include genetics, infections, inflammation, physical injuries, high blood pressure, older age, smoking, and high cholesterol.

### What do I need to do?

Many small aneurysms don't need further testing or treatment, but some may require monitoring to see if they change over time. We've asked the cardiology team to reach out to you about scheduling a more detailed scan. This scan will help confirm whether you have any enlargement of your aorta. If it is enlarged, you may require occasional surveillance scans to monitor the size of your aorta over the years ahead. In many cases the aorta size remains stable over time, but occasionally if it enlarges further then surgery can be considered to repair the aorta.

It's very important to keep your blood pressure under control. If you haven't checked your blood pressure recently, please contact your doctor's office or a local pharmacy to set up an appointment. They can guide you on what to do if your blood pressure needs extra attention.

In rare cases, aneurysms can cause symptoms like new or severe pain in your neck, chest, or back, a persistent cough, trouble swallowing, or a hoarse voice. If you experience any of these symptoms or already have them and haven't talked to your doctor yet, please reach out to your doctor's office (or call 111 or go to the emergency room if it's severe) and let them know about your new diagnosis. In some cases, aneurysms may need urgent care.

### Where can I find out more/get support/find out about improving my general health?

For more information on thoracic aortic aneurysms see the British Heart foundation website – "Information and Support" section, under "Conditions" or call their helpline on **0808 802 1234**, freephone weekdays 9am to 5pm (except bank holidays).

The most helpful thing to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease is to stop smoking. If you would like to discuss the options regarding this, or other things to improve your health please call Livewell Dorset on **0800 840 1628**.