

## FOU'S STORY



Last year I noticed some chest discomfort over my heart that was not there all the time and not painful but enough to make me worry about a heart attack. I went to see my GP and got an ultrasound scan.

I took the scan report back to my GP on the same day who arranged for admission to Auckland Hospital immediately and I had surgery the next morning.

What I couldn't understand was why my GP and the hospital doctors were rushing to get me to theatre because I was not sick and did not have any pains. The doctors said I had a large aneurysm that needed urgent repair to prevent bleeding.

I am a very lucky man that the aneurysm was picked up in time and I got my surgery before any complications.

I have asked my brother to go for aneurysm check-up because it runs in the family and I had not heard of aneurysm before. I have stopped smoking since.

To book a **FREE** scan or for more information call Erin on **0800 55 75 85** or **021 198 8568**

*'We need to look after our health for our mokopuna and be there for our family.'*

### Where can I get advice or support?

You can talk with your doctor to see if they think that screening is the right thing for you, they know that you have been invited for this scan or you can contact the AAA/AF study team:

#### **ERIN CHAMBERS**

Kaimatawai Puku (AAA Screener), Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ)

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If you want to talk to someone who is not involved in the study, (and not your doctor), you can contact an independent health and disability advocate.

**PHONE:** 0800 555 050

**EMAIL:** [advocacy@advocacy.org](mailto:advocacy@advocacy.org)

*AAA/AF Screening Project has received ethical approval: (HDEC Ref 19/NTB/227).*

# Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand

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Waitematā - Te Toka  
Tumai Auckland

# AAA/AF SCREENING PROJECT

(Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm / Atrial Fibrillation)

For Māori and Pacific Men aged  
60-74 and Women aged 65-74

**Te Whatu Ora**  
Health New Zealand

## What is Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm (AAA or 'triple A')?

Your aorta is the main blood vessel which takes blood from your heart to the lower part of your body. An aneurysm (you say "ann you rizz em") is when the wall of the aorta gets weak and stretches, like a weak spot in a bike tyre.

## Why is an AAA important to know about?

An AAA that gets very large may burst and cause internal bleeding. This is a hospital emergency, needing lifesaving surgery.

## Why screen for AAA?

Most people who have an AAA don't feel unwell and it is very difficult for your doctor to detect an AAA. The best way to find out if you have an AAA is to have an ultrasound scan.



### • NORMAL AORTA

You will be reassured that you do not need any more tests.



### • SMALL ANEURYSM

If your aorta is slightly enlarged, you will be referred to Vascular Services at Auckland City Hospital.



### • LARGE ANEURYSM

If your aorta is very large it may need surgery to repair it. You will be referred to Vascular Services at Auckland City Hospital as soon as possible.

## What is AF?

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a common irregular heart rhythm. Having AF increases your chance of having a stroke. Taking medication to control the AF will reduce this risk.

## What tests are offered at this free appointment?

### 1. AAA SCAN

The ultrasound scan (much like the scan for pregnant women) is quick, safe, painless and reliable. It takes about 10 minutes. Your scan result will be explained to you at the appointment. All follow-up treatment is free\*.

### 2. HEART RHYTHM TEST

The test for atrial fibrillation (AF) takes one minute using just your fingertips!



### 3. YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE, WEIGHT AND HEIGHT

These will be measured at your appointment. If you want to quit smoking we can also help with that.

The screening appointment takes about 40 minutes. We encourage you to bring a family member or friend to support you.

### 4. SURVEY

There will also be the option to complete either a brief survey or, if you like, a longer interview to give your opinion on this screening project and what tests could be added to your appointment that are most important to you and your Whānau.

## What is the AAA/AF Screening Project?

Te Whatu Ora (Health NZ) is working with local GPs to offer this screening check in your region. AAA/AF screening has previously been offered for Māori and Pacific in the Auckland region. This research project will help find the best way to offer this screening in your communities.

## Your Choice

It's your choice if you want to be screened for AAA and AF. You do not have to give a reason if you don't want to join in and it will not affect any future health services.

## Things to consider before you decide

Would you want to know if you have a AAA?

If an AAA is found, you may have regular scans to monitor its size or surgery to have it repaired. You will also receive advice on what you can do to help slow down an AAA's growth.

Some people may feel anxious if a small aneurysm is found and regular checks recommended. Health staff, including your own doctor, are experienced in providing support and advice that can reassure you.



*\*You must be eligible for New Zealand publicly funded health services to take part in the AAA/AF screening.*