

Acute Aortic Syndrome (AAS)

Chest Pain

“Is it the heart?” “No.”

“Could it be the Aorta?” “Let’s check and see.”



Normal Aorta (chest view)



Ascending Aortic Aneurysm (chest view)

What is AAS?

- Chest pain associated with the aorta, the largest artery in the body which begins from the left ventricle of the heart
- May produce stomach/abdominal symptoms in some individuals (nausea, vomiting, pain in abdominal area)
- Symptoms may range from mild to extremely severe
- Caused by a distended aortic wall in distress
- Aortic tissue may tear or completely rupture – a life-threatening emergency

Who has AAS?

- Anyone with an aortic aneurysm or dissection in the chest, often coupled with hypertension, regardless of the underlying cause
- Those with a bicuspid aortic valve, any other connective tissue disorder affecting blood vessels, or a family history of aneurysms (brain as well as aortic) are among those at risk

How is AAS found?

- CT with contrast (CTA) or transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE) of the entire aorta
- MRI/MRA in non-urgent situations
- EKG and cardiac enzymes usually remain normal - the heart is not implicated

When heart disease is not present, anxiety cannot be assumed. The aorta may be the problem. Unless the entire aorta is checked, the source of pain and other symptoms – the aorta – may only be found after death. Scanning the aorta saves lives!

This information is provided to increase awareness of acute aortic syndrome and aortic disease in the chest. For additional information, please contact:

Bicuspid Aortic Foundation

www.bicuspidfoundation.com (888) 310-HOPE (4673) or (949) 495-0027

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