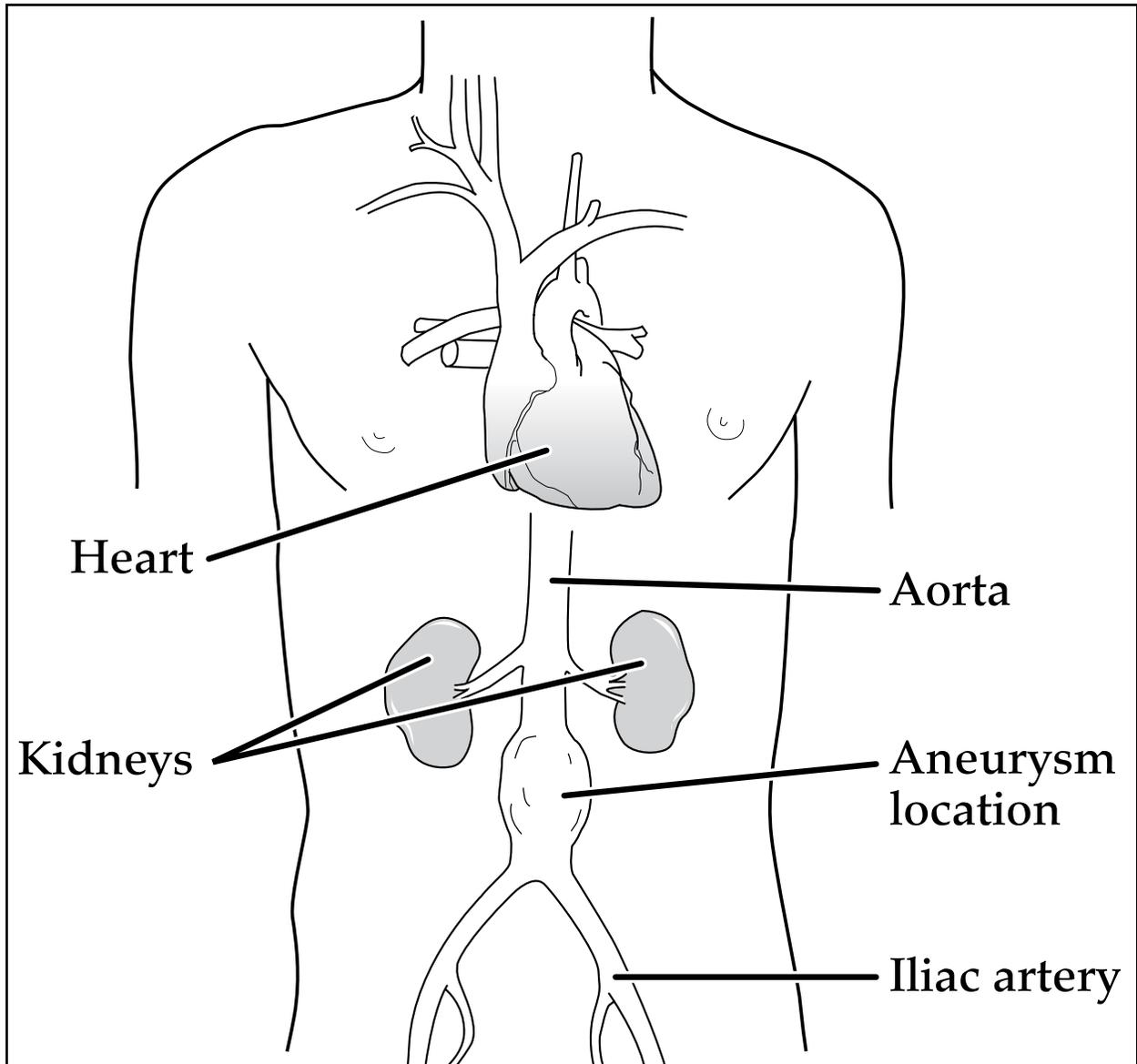


# What Is an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm?



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## What Is an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm?

An abdominal aortic aneurysm (also called an AAA) is a swelling of your aorta. The aorta leads down from your heart to the arteries that branch out to your kidneys, abdomen and legs.

An aneurysm is formed by the weakening of your artery wall. The weakened wall balloons out and becomes very weak.

The AAA can be dangerous because it can disturb the usual blood flow in your aorta.

This may cause blood clots and particles to break off and go to your legs and organs.

Over time, the aneurysm can grow bigger and may rupture without warning, causing severe internal bleeding.

*(over)*

## Treatment

There are two different types of treatment for an abdominal aortic aneurysm:

- **abdominal aortic aneurysm surgery:** Surgery is the standard treatment for an abdominal aortic aneurysm. (See series of drawing at left.)

During surgery, the weakened wall of the aorta is replaced with a hollow tube made of strong fabric. This is called a graft. You will be put to sleep under general anesthesia.

The surgery takes about 3 to 4 hours.

- **endovascular stent grafting:** Two small incisions are made in the femoral arteries in your leg (near the groin). A catheter (a small, thin tube) is inserted into the artery and guided to the aneurysm.

A graft is sent through the catheter and released inside the aorta. The graft will expand to replace the weakened wall of the aorta. The catheter is removed.

The procedure takes about 3 hours.

Your health care provider will help you decide which type of treatment is right for you.

