

CottageHouseCall

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Endovascular Surgery to Repair Abdominal Aortic Aneurysms

An abdominal aortic aneurysm is the weakening and enlargement of the abdominal artery, which if left untreated can lead to rupture and death. Abdominal aortic aneurysms (commonly referred to as AAA's or Triple A's) are a leading cause of death in the United States affecting nearly 200,000 Americans each year. Since only one out of two patients with an AAA rupture will survive, a surgical endovascular repair can be vital.

Endovascular repair is minimally invasive and a relatively new surgical procedure which involves sealing off the aneurysm by placing an endovascular graft inside the diseased artery allowing blood to flow more freely.

The procedure typically takes up to 3 hours to complete and requires a hospital stay of just a few days. But since the procedure is minimally invasive, patients can resume normal activity within 6 weeks after surgery. 59-year old Melvin Moore of Knoxville, Illinois, was operated on in late July and discharged from Galesburg Cottage Hospital just a day after the surgery. A week and a half later, Mel was feeling pretty good, "I have a little pressure with my muscles feeling tight which is probably a good thing since I `m not a "don't do anything-type person" and the tightness keeps me from doing more."

Since many people do not experience any symptoms of an AAA, you should know your risks. Sometimes an AAA may be discovered during a routine physical exam. Your doctor may feel a bulge or pulsation (throbbing) in your abdomen and will order a CT scan or ultrasound. In Melvin's case, a small abdominal aortic aneurism measuring 4.0 centimeters was discovered during routine intestinal surgery a year earlier. When the aneurysm grew to 4.9 centimeters, Mel was referred to Mark Davis, M.D., F.A.C.S., a general surgeon practicing in Galesburg and a member of the Galesburg Cottage Hospital medical staff.

"Mel was in great condition and I knew an endovascular graft would allow him to resume his active lifestyle soon but Mel really is one for the record books," said Dr. Davis. Mel chuckles at the idea of having too much recuperation time on his hands and said he hopes Dr. Davis will allow him to return to work within three weeks of his Triple A surgery. "As soon as I can talk Dr. Davis into it, I'll be going back to work." But even as Mel spoke, the clamor of children could be heard in the background. "Oh yea, I've got the grandkids to keep me occupied until I'm back at it which I'm hoping might even be Monday."

When asked if he had any advice for patients considering endovascular surgery, Mel said, "Do it and go to Dr. Davis because he's really the best and you'll be up and around in no time."

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