

Subarachnoid haemorrhage caused by a ruptured aneurysm: diagnosis and management

Information for the public

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Subarachnoid haemorrhage: the care you should expect

A subarachnoid haemorrhage is a bleed on the surface of the brain, usually caused by a burst blood vessel (called a brain aneurysm). The main symptom of a subarachnoid haemorrhage is a sudden, very severe headache but other symptoms can include a stiff neck, vomiting (being sick), fainting or seizures. It is not always clear what causes brain aneurysms, or why they burst, but people may be more at risk if they smoke, have high blood pressure or have a family history of brain aneurysms. Because a subarachnoid haemorrhage is very serious and can be fatal, getting the right treatment as quickly as possible is very important.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people who have a subarachnoid haemorrhage by making sure:

- the right tests are used to diagnose it as quickly as possible
- people are offered the most effective treatments
- specialist care and treatment is available when people need it
- people get better information and support after a subarachnoid haemorrhage so they know what to expect and who to contact if they have concerns.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your healthcare team should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the treatment that worry you more than others?
- What are the benefits and risks of having treatment if you have an unruptured aneurysm (that has not burst)?
- What follow-up care and check-ups might be needed?

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your healthcare team.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about subarachnoid haemorrhage.

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [BASIC](#) (brain and spinal injury charity), 0161 707 6441
- [Brain and Spine Foundation](#), 0808 808 1000
- [Headway](#) – the brain injury association, 0808 800 2244
- [Stroke Association](#), 0303 3033 100

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by subarachnoid haemorrhage and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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