



DECISION AID

Brain aneurysm: What are your treatment options?

You have been diagnosed with a brain aneurysm. This means that a blood vessel in your brain is bulging outward in one area. Most brain aneurysms never cause any problems. But they can rupture (burst) without warning, leading to life-threatening bleeding in the brain.

There are various ways to deal with an unruptured brain aneurysm. One option is to have a surgical procedure to close off the aneurysm and prevent it from rupturing. This can be done in two main ways: through microsurgery by opening the skull or an endovascular procedure using a catheter. But both procedures come with a risk of complications, such as strokes. Another option is to have regular check-ups to monitor the aneurysm and see if it changes – without surgery.

The aim of this decision aid is to help you to decide together with your doctors whether or not to have surgery.

THESE ARE THE TREATMENT OPTIONS:

- | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Regular check-ups | — Scans using imaging techniques |
| Surgical procedure | ┌ Microsurgery (clipping) |
| | └ Catheter procedure (coiling) |

You can read about the pros and cons of these treatments on the next few pages.

The benefits of a treatment will vary from person to person, depending on the likelihood of their aneurysm rupturing (bursting) and their potential pros and cons associated with the procedure.

MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION

This decision aid probably won't include all of the information that you need. It is still important to talk to a doctor, but the decision aid can help you. When considering whether to have a surgical procedure for prevention purposes, your decision will mainly depend on your answers to these questions:

- How do you feel about the risk of the aneurysm causing problems?
- How do you feel about the potential benefits and risks of a surgical procedure?

Personal factors will play a role here, such as how you feel about going for regular check-ups or living with an aneurysm.



Even if you find the aneurysm very distressing: Take the time to find out what you want to know and don't let anyone pressure you into choosing a certain treatment.

PROS AND CONS OF THE TREATMENT OPTIONS

	Regular check-ups	Surgical procedure
What does the treatment involve?	<p>You have regular brain scans (typically every 12 months) to see whether the aneurysm is changing. The scans are done using imaging techniques such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or computed tomography (CT).</p> <p>The scans may involve exposure to radiation. Sometimes you may also be given a contrast agent.</p> <p>If you have related medical problems such as high blood pressure, they are treated with medication.</p>	<p>During microsurgery (clipping), a small opening is made in the skull and the aneurysm is closed off using a small metal clip.</p> <p>During a catheter procedure (coiling), a long tube is inserted into an artery in your arm or groin and guided through your bloodstream until it reaches the aneurysm. In most cases, fine metal coils are then placed inside the aneurysm. This causes the blood in the aneurysm to clot.</p> <p>Any related health problems you have, like high blood pressure, are treated with medication.</p>
Who is the treatment suitable for?	<p>For everyone with a brain aneurysm, including people who are currently not allowed to have a surgical procedure.</p>	<p>For people in good or moderate general health who don't have any other serious medical conditions.</p> <p>The surgical options will depend on your age and medical history, as well as on the location and shape of the aneurysm.</p>
How much can the treatment help?	<p>Monitoring the aneurysm reduces the risk of a rupture indirectly: It can detect if the risk increases. Then you and your doctor can consider surgery again.</p>	<p>A surgical procedure can prevent the aneurysm from rupturing by closing it off.</p>
What are the possible disadvantages of the treatment?	<p>The aneurysm can rupture (burst open). A rupture is a medical emergency that can lead to death or the need for long-term nursing care.</p> <p>In about 3 out of 100 people who have a brain aneurysm, it ruptures within 5 years. Your personal risk of a rupture will depend on various factors and may be a lot lower or higher.</p> <p>Your doctor can help you to estimate your risk.</p>	<p>Surgical procedures can lead to serious complications such as a stroke, severe bleeding, paralysis, unusual sensations, vision problems or speech problems. About 1 in 100 people need long-term nursing care or die as a result.</p> <p>Your personal risk of surgical complications will depend on various factors. You can talk to your doctor about the risks associated with the procedures that are an option for you.</p>

YOUR DECISION

You can now weigh the pros and cons of the different treatments for yourself. Which of them are better suited to you and your life circumstances, and which of them aren't?

WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU?

You can use this table to note the main issues for you when considering the options. Which of them will affect your decision? How important are they to you? Mark the statements that apply to you, and add any thoughts of your own. Ranking the statements could help: For instance, you could mark the statements that are especially important to you with a 1, those that are a little less important with a 2, and so on.

Which statements apply to you?		Ranking (1, 2, ...)
It is important to me to reduce the risk of a life-threatening rupture as soon as possible.	<input type="radio"/>	
I really want to avoid serious complications caused by preventive surgery.	<input type="radio"/>	
It is hard for me to live with the fact that I have an untreated aneurysm.	<input type="radio"/>	
Regular check-ups aren't a problem for me.	<input type="radio"/>	
	<input type="radio"/>	
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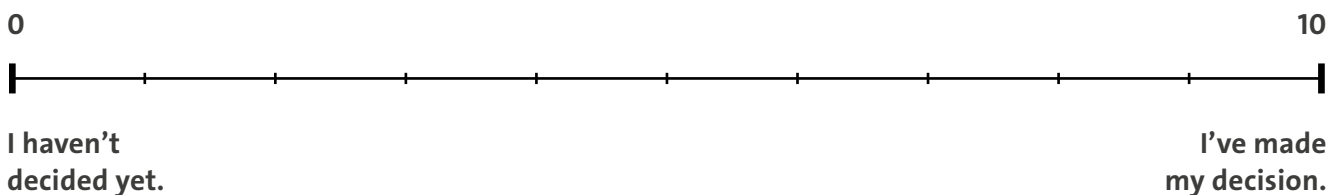
WHICH TREATMENT WOULD YOU CONSIDER?

You can use this table to assess the different treatments. Mark the ones you would consider and write down what you like and don't like about them.

Which treatment would you consider?		What do you like about it?	What don't you like about it?
Regular check-ups	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Surgical procedure	<input type="checkbox"/>		

HOW FAR HAVE YOU GOT WITH YOUR DECISION?

You can use this section to record how far along you are in your decision-making process. Mark where you are on a scale of 0 to 10.



If you still aren't sure and need more help, you can find some tips and more information on the following pages.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED IN ORDER TO MAKE A DECISION?

If you still can't decide, the following might help:

Knowledge If you feel that you don't have enough information:	<input type="checkbox"/> Write down any questions you still have (see below). <input type="checkbox"/> Take this decision aid and your list of questions along to your next appointment and talk about them with your doctor. <input type="checkbox"/> Get more information (for example, on the internet) but make sure your sources are reliable! <input type="checkbox"/> Get a second medical opinion.
Support If you feel you need more support:	<input type="checkbox"/> Discuss the various options with a trusted person (for instance, with your doctor, someone in your family, or a friend). <input type="checkbox"/> Contact patient advice services or a support group. You will find more information about this on the next page. <input type="checkbox"/> Seek help to support your choice (like financial support, childcare, transport for appointments, or someone to go with you).







PREPARING FOR THE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT

Do you still have any questions or concerns? Write down your questions or your own thoughts to discuss with the doctor.

There's a list of possible questions here:

informedhealth.org/questions

YOU WILL FIND IN-DEPTH INFORMATION ABOUT THE FOLLOWING TOPICS ON THE INTERNET:

	Brain aneurysm informedhealth.org/brain-aneurysm.html
	What are the treatment options for a brain aneurysm? informedhealth.org/brain-aneurysm-treatment
	Deciding whether to have brain aneurysm surgery informedhealth.org/brain-aneurysm-surgery-decision
	At the hospital in Germany informedhealth.org/at-the-hospital.html
	Surgery informedhealth.org/surgery.html
	Patient advice services and support groups informedhealth.org/support-groups-and-information-centers

PUBLISHING DETAILS

Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG, Germany)

informedhealth.org/about-us

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The format of this decision aid is based on the following:

- Ottawa Personal Decision Guide. O'Connor, Stacey, Jacobsen 2012. Ottawa Hospital Research Institute and University of Ottawa, Canada.
- MAKING SDM A REALITY – Hospital-wide shared decision making – G-BA Innovation fund 2023.
- Institute for Quality and Efficiency in Health Care (IQWiG, Germany). Development of a decision aid for hysterectomy: Rapid Report; Commission P18-01. 2019.