

VASCULAR HEALTH SCREENING



The New Mexico Heart Institute is pleased to offer a simple, painless and inexpensive screening test for arterial aneurysms and peripheral vascular disease.

What is the Vascular Health Screening test? NMHI's fully accredited vascular laboratory uses harmless ultrasound imaging to rapidly detect the presence or absence of aneurysms and peripheral vascular disease. This screening examination consists of four components:

1. **Blood pressure check** for hypertension (high blood pressure).
2. **Abdominal aortic ultrasound scan** of the body's main artery to detect the presence of an aneurysm, or ballooning of the artery. If an aneurysm is found, further testing can determine how big the aneurysm is and if it needs treatment.
3. **Carotid artery ultrasound scan** to determine the presence of significant carotid artery blockage which can cause strokes.
- 4 **Ankle/brachial indices** to determine the presence of significant arterial blockage in the legs.

Is the test safe? Yes, ultrasound is very safe, the same type of imaging is used during pregnancy. No radiation is used.

What is the preparation? The screening will be scheduled for the earlier morning hours. Please fast from midnight (do not eat or drink) before the test to improve the quality of the images of the abdominal aorta. Please wear comfortable clothing that allows access to the neck, abdomen and ankles.

Who should have the vascular screening test? Anyone over the age of 45 with the following risk factors: high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, previous tobacco use, obesity or family history of cardiovascular disease.

Who should not have the vascular screening test? Those less than the age of 45 without any risk factors for cardiovascular disease as listed above.

How is the screening done? The scan itself is very quick. It takes about 30 minutes in total to register at the front desk, complete a brief evaluation, have the testing and get final instructions. After changing into a gown, you will lie down on an imaging table. The technician will use an ultrasound probe to visualize the arteries in your neck and abdomen. You will then have blood pressures taken from your arms and legs.

What happens if the patient has a positive vascular screening test? Your results will be reviewed by a New Mexico Heart Institute physician who will decide whether additional testing should be recommended. These results will be discussed with you and your referring doctor.

If the patient's vascular screening is normal, is there any future risk of vascular disease? Having a normal test is encouraging, but it does not mean your risk developing vascular disease in the future is zero. It is important you use a normal vascular screening test as motivation to continue to live a healthy and active lifestyle.

How to I get a vascular health screening and what does it cost? The cost is **\$150 (includes tax)** as most insurance companies will not cover this test. If you are interested, please call the New Mexico Heart Institute in Albuquerque at **(505) 841-1000** or **(800) 715-6644**.