Causes of an AAA

It’s not known exactly what causes the aortic wall to weaken, although increasing age and being male are known to be the biggest risk factors.

There are other risk factors you can do something about, including smoking and having high blood pressure and cholesterol level.

Having a family history of aortic aneurysms also means that you have an increased risk of developing one yourself.

Prevention

The best way to prevent getting an aneurysm – or reduce the risk of an aneurysm growing bigger and possibly rupturing – is to avoid anything that could damage your blood vessels, such as:

- smoking
- eating a high-fat diet
- not exercising regularly
- being overweight or obes

What are the causes of Achilles tendinopathy?

Achilles tendinopathy can occur in both active and inactive people.

The causes can be varied but there are some common factors that are important.

These can include:

- a sudden or gradual change in load, for example changes in the level of exercise or taking up a new sport, beyond your normal levels of strength or endurance
- spending a long time standing still
- wearing unsuitable or poorly fitting footwear for the activities you’re doing
- sedentary behaviour that can weaken your muscles and tendons over time
- smoking
- other health conditions such as being overweight, diabetes and inflammatory arthritis

How to manage Achilles tendinopathy

Managing Achilles tendinopathy can take time, in most cases several months or more.

Learn about exercises for foot conditions

To help manage the pain you can take painkillers.

Read more about taking painkillers

Achilles tendinopathy does not improve with rest, so, to help your recovery it's important to keep up as much of your normal daily activity as you can. You may have to modify what you do, by taking breaks, doing less or changing activity.

When you see a Healthcare Professional they will give guidance on what exercise levels you should be aiming for.

If you're waiting to see a Healthcare Professional you should be trying to do some exercise, this may cause some discomfort and short term pain that returns back to your normal level within a few hours.

Why do I have acne?

Acne is most commonly linked to the changes in hormone levels during puberty, but can start at any age.

Certain hormones cause the grease-producing glands next to hair follicles in the skin to produce larger amounts of oil (abnormal sebum).

This abnormal sebum changes the activity of a usually harmless skin bacterium called P. acnes, which becomes more aggressive and causes inflammation and pus.

The hormones also thicken the inner lining of the hair follicle, causing blockage of the pores (opening of the hair follicles). Cleaning the skin doesn't help to remove this blockage.

Other possible causes

Acne is known to run in families. If both your mother and father had acne, it's likely that you'll also have acne.

Hormonal changes, such as those that occur during the menstrual cycle or pregnancy, can also lead to episodes of acne in women.

There's no evidence that diet, poor hygiene or sexual activity play a role in acne.

Read more about the causes of acne, including some common acne myths.

Who's affected?

Acne is very common in teenagers and younger adults. About 80% of people aged 11 to 30 are affected by acne.

Acne is most common in girls from the ages of 14 to 17, and in boys from the ages of 16 to 19.

Most people have acne on and off for several years before their symptoms start to improve as they get older. Acne often disappears when a person is in their mid-twenties.

In some cases, acne can continue into adult life. About 5% of women and 1% of men have acne over the age of 25.

What causes acute cholecystitis?

The causes of acute cholecystitis can be grouped into 2 main categories: calculous cholecystitis and acalculous cholecystitis.

Calculous cholecystitis

Calculous cholecystitis is the most common, and usually less serious, type of acute cholecystitis. It accounts for around 95% of all cases.

Calculous cholecystitis develops when the main opening to the gallbladder, called the cystic duct, gets blocked by a gallstone or by a substance known as biliary sludge.

Biliary sludge is a mixture of bile (a liquid produced by the liver that helps digest fats) and small crystals of cholesterol and salt.

The blockage in the cystic duct results in a build-up of bile in the gallbladder, increasing the pressure inside it and causing it to become inflamed. In around 1 in every 5 cases, the inflamed gallbladder also becomes infected by bacteria.

Acalculous cholecystitis

Acalculous cholecystitis is a less common, but usually more serious, type of acute cholecystitis. It usually develops as a complication of a serious illness, infection or injury that damages the gallbladder.

Acalculous cholecystitis is often associated with problems such as accidental damage to the gallbladder during major surgery, serious injuries or burns, blood poisoning (sepsis), severe malnutrition or AIDS.

Who is affected

Acute cholecystitis is a relatively common complication of gallstones.

It's estimated that around 10% to 15% of adults in the UK have gallstones. These don't usually cause any symptoms, but in a small proportion of people they can cause infrequent episodes of pain (known as biliary colic) or acute cholecystitis.

Preventing acute cholecystitis

It's not always possible to prevent acute cholecystitis, but you can reduce your risk of developing the condition by cutting your risk of gallstones.

One of the main steps you can take to help lower your chances of developing gallstones is adopting a healthy, balanced diet and reducing the number of high-cholesterol foods you eat, as cholesterol is thought to contribute to the formation of gallstones.

Being overweight, particularly being obese, also increases your risk of developing gallstones. You should therefore control your weight by eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

However, low-calorie, rapid weight loss diets should be avoided, because there is evidence they can disrupt your bile chemistry and actually increase your risk of developing gallstones. A more gradual weight loss plan is best.

Causes

The exact cause of ALL is unknown. Research is going on all the time into possible causes of this disease. Children with certain genetic disorders, such as Down's syndrome, are known to have a higher risk of developing leukaemia. Brothers and sisters of a child with ALL (particularly identical twins) have a slightly increased risk of developing ALL themselves, although this risk is still small.

Like all cancers, ALL is not infectious and cannot be passed on to other people.

Causes

It's not known exactly what causes ALL. Research is going on to try to find out.

Young people with some genetic conditions, such as Down's syndrome or Li-Fraumeni syndrome, are at an increased risk of developing ALL. A genetic condition is something you are born with.

Seeking medical advice

You should see your GP if you or your child have possible symptoms of AML. Although it's highly unlikely that leukaemia is the cause, these symptoms should be investigated.

If your GP thinks you may have leukaemia, they'll arrange blood tests to check your blood cell production. If the tests suggest there's a problem, you'll be urgently referred to a haematologist (a specialist in treating blood conditions) for further tests and any necessary treatment.

Read more about diagnosing AML

What causes AML?

AML occurs when specialised cells called stem cells, which are found in the bone marrow (a spongy material inside the bones), produce too many immature white blood cells. These immature cells are known as blast cells.

Blast cells don't have the infection-fighting properties of healthy white blood cells, and producing too many can lead to a decrease in the number of red blood cells (which carry oxygen in the blood) and platelets (cells that help the blood to clot).

It's not clear exactly why this happens and, in most cases, there's no identifiable cause. However, a number of factors that can increase your risk of developing AML have been identified. These include:

- previous chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- exposure to very high levels of radiation (including previous radiotherapy treatment)
- exposure to benzene – a chemical used in manufacturing that's also found in cigarette smoke
- having an underlying blood disorder or genetic disorder, such as Down's syndrome

Read more about the causes of AML

Who's affected

AML is a rare type of cancer. The risk of developing AML increases with age. It's most common in people over 65.

Acute myeloid leukaemia: Children

Causes

The exact cause of AML is unknown. Research into possible causes of this disease is ongoing. Children with certain genetic disorders, such as Down's syndrome or Li-Fraumeni syndrome, are known to have a higher risk of developing leukaemia. Brothers and sisters of a child with AML have a slightly increased risk of developing it, although this risk is still small. Other non-cancerous conditions, such as aplastic anaemia or the myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS), may increase a child's risk of developing AML.

AML, like all types of cancer, is not infectious and cannot be passed on to other people.

Acute myeloid leukaemia: Teenagers and young adults

Causes

It’s not known exactly what causes AML. Research is going on to try to find out. We do know some things might increase the risk of AML:

- some genetic conditions, like Down’s Syndrome (a genetic condition is something you are born with)
- some non-cancerous conditions of the bone marrow, such as aplastic anaemia or myelodysplastic syndromes

Addison’s disease

Why it happens

- The condition is usually the result of a problem with the immune system, which causes it to attack the outer layer of the adrenal gland (the adrenal cortex), disrupting the production of steroid hormones aldosterone and cortisol. It’s not clear why this happens, but it’s responsible for 70% to 90% of cases in the UK.
- Other potential causes include conditions that can damage the adrenal glands, such as tuberculosis (TB), although this is uncommon in the UK.

Adenomyosis

Causes

- It’s not known exactly why adenomyosis happens.
- Adenomyosis is not an infection and it’s not contagious. It is benign (not cancerous).

Alcohol-related liver disease

Preventing ARLD

- The most effective way to prevent ARLD is to stop drinking alcohol or stick to the low-risk drinking guidelines.
- Even if you’ve been a heavy drinker for many years, reducing or stopping your alcohol intake will have important short- and long-term benefits for your liver and overall health.

Allergic rhinitis

What causes allergic rhinitis?

Allergic rhinitis is caused by breathing in tiny particles that you’re allergic to. The most common allergens in the air that cause rhinitis are:

- house dust mites
- pollen and spores
- flakes of animal skin
- wood dust
- flour dust
- latex

You're more likely to develop an allergy if there's a history of allergies in your family.

Complications of allergic rhinitis

Allergic rhinitis can lead to complications in some cases. These include:

- nasal polyps – abnormal but non-cancerous (benign) growths inside the nose and sinuses
- sinusitis – inflammation that blocks the sinuses so mucus cannot drain into your nose as usual
- blockage of the middle ear – due to a build-up of fluid behind the eardrum

These problems can often be treated with medication. Surgery is sometimes needed in severe or long-term cases.

Allergies

What causes allergies?

Allergies occur when the body's immune system reacts to a particular substance as though it's harmful.

It's not clear why this happens, but most people affected have a family history of allergies or have closely related conditions such as asthma or eczema.

The number of people with allergies is increasing every year. The reasons for this are not understood, but one of the main theories is it's the result of living in a cleaner, germ-free environment, which reduces the number of germs our immune system has to deal with.

Alzheimer's disease

Causes of Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is thought to be caused by the build up of amyloid and tau. These are substances found inside the brain.

Amyloid and tau build up and form tiny structures called plaques and tangles. These make it harder for the brain to work properly.

Over time, Alzheimer's disease causes parts of the brain to get smaller. It also reduces chemicals in the brain that are used to send messages around the brain.

Eventually, the brain struggles to cope with the damage. This can lead to problems with memory and thinking.

Over time, damage also spreads to different areas of the brain. The first areas affected are the ones that are responsible for memories.

Risk factors for Alzheimer's disease

The exact cause of Alzheimer's disease is unknown. But, many things could increase your risk of developing the condition. These include:

- increasing age
- having had a severe head injury in the past
- in very rare cases, a family history of the condition

Anal cancer

What causes anal cancer?

The exact cause of anal cancer is unknown, although a number of factors can increase your risk of developing the condition. These include:

- infection with human papilloma virus (HPV) – a common and usually harmless group of viruses spread through sexual contact, which can affect the moist membranes lining your body
- having anal sex or lots of sexual partners – possibly because this increases your risk of developing HPV
- having a history of cervical, vaginal or vulval cancer
- smoking
- having a weakened immune system – for example, if you have HIV

Anaphylaxis

Causes and triggers

Anaphylaxis is the result of your body's immune system overreacting to a harmless substance, such as food. Substances that trigger allergic reactions are known as allergens.

Anaphylaxis usually develops within minutes of contact with an allergen, but sometimes the reaction can happen up to 4 hours later.

The most widely reported triggers of anaphylaxis are:

- insect stings – particularly wasp and bee stings
- peanuts and tree nuts
- other types of foods – such as milk and seafood
- certain medicines – such as antibiotics

Read more about the causes of anaphylaxis.

Preventing further episodes

If you know what has triggered anaphylaxis, it's important to take steps to avoid exposure to similar triggers.

You should be referred to a specialist allergy clinic to either find out your allergy triggers or, if you already know what causes it, for further assessment and advice about how to avoid allergens in the future.

You may be given two adrenaline auto-injectors to use during any future episodes of anaphylaxis.

Read more about preventing anaphylaxis.