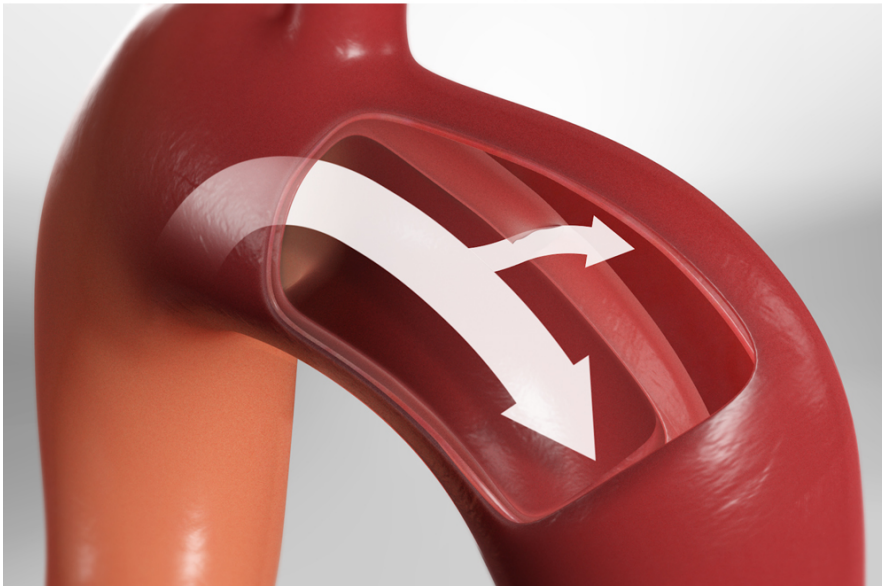
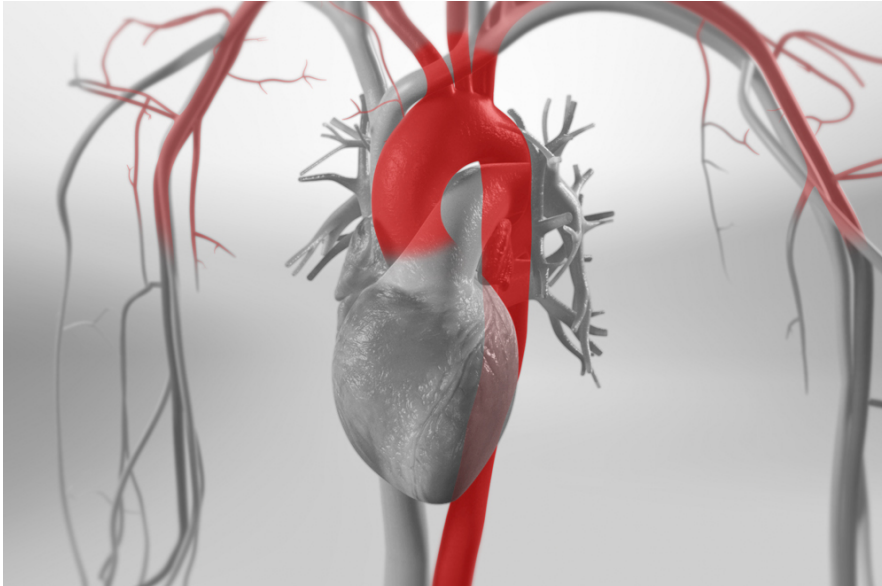




Aortic Dissection



Overview

This is a tear in the wall of your aorta. Your aorta is the large blood vessel that carries blood from your heart to the rest of your body. The wall of the aorta is made of three layers. An aortic dissection is a tear in the aorta's inner wall. Blood flows through the tear and separates the aorta's inner and middle layers. Blood that normally flows to other parts of your body fills this space, forming a bulge.

Causes

What causes an aortic dissection? Most often, it happens when the aorta's wall weakens over time. In some people, this weakening may be linked to high blood pressure. In others, it may be linked to a genetic syndrome or other inherited issue.

Risk factors

Things like high blood pressure and high cholesterol raise your risk for this condition. You have a higher risk if you have a family history, or if you have a condition that affects the aorta or heart. Ask your doctor for a full list of risk factors.

Symptoms

What are the symptoms? You feel a sudden, sharp pain. You may feel it in your chest or upper back. Your blood pressure may drop, and you can have a fast, weak pulse. You may have shortness of breath, sweating and confusion. You may feel dizzy, and you may faint. Your symptoms may seem like those of a stroke.

Treatment

How do we treat it? Aortic dissection is a medical emergency. Get immediate medical care. We treat aortic dissection with surgery to repair the aorta. We may also use medications to lower the heart rate and blood pressure. Your doctor will create a care plan that's right for you.