

JoAnn's Journey's Aneurysm Glossary – joannsjourney.org

20 Essential Medical Terms in Cerebrovascular Care: Understanding stroke terminology is vital for accurate diagnosis, treatment planning, and patient education.

Being diagnosed with a brain aneurysm—or caring for someone who has—can feel confusing, especially when you're suddenly faced with a lot of unfamiliar medical language. This glossary was created to help you feel more confident and informed as you navigate discussions with your healthcare team. Each term is explained in clear, compassionate language designed for patients, families, and anyone new to the condition. [Click here](#) for a downloadable version.

1. Aneurysm

A weak or bulging spot in the wall of a blood vessel. In the brain, this bulge can fill with blood and sometimes burst, causing serious bleeding.

2. Cerebral Aneurysm

Another name for a brain aneurysm. “Cerebral” simply means “related to the brain.”

3. Rupture

When an aneurysm bursts open, causing bleeding in or around the brain. This is a medical emergency.

4. Subarachnoid Hemorrhage (SAH)

Bleeding into the space between the brain and the tissues that cover it. This often happens when a brain aneurysm ruptures.

5. Hemorrhagic Stroke

A type of stroke caused by bleeding in the brain, often linked to a ruptured aneurysm.

6. Ischemic Stroke

A stroke caused by a blockage (like a blood clot) that cuts off blood flow to part of the brain. It's different from a hemorrhagic stroke.

7. Endovascular Coiling

A minimally invasive treatment where small coils are placed inside the aneurysm to block blood flow and reduce the chance of rupture.

8. Surgical Clipping

A procedure where a neurosurgeon places a small metal clip at the base of the aneurysm to stop blood from entering it.

9. Flow Diverter

A tiny mesh device placed inside an artery to guide blood past the aneurysm, helping it shrink and heal.

10. Pipeline Embolization Device (PED)

A specific kind of flow diverter designed for larger or more complex aneurysms. It's inserted through a blood vessel without opening the skull.

11. CT Scan (Computed Tomography)

A quick imaging test that uses X-rays to create detailed pictures of the brain. It's often used to detect bleeding or aneurysms.

12. MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)

An imaging test that uses magnetic fields (not X-rays) to take clear pictures of the brain and blood vessels.

13. MRA (Magnetic Resonance Angiography)

A special type of MRI that focuses on blood vessels, often used to look for unruptured aneurysms.

14. Angiogram (Cerebral Angiography)

A test where contrast dye is injected into the blood vessels and X-rays are taken to closely examine the brain's blood flow and any aneurysms.

15. Catheter

A thin, flexible tube used in many procedures to deliver tools, dye, or medication through the blood vessels to the brain.

16. Neurosurgeon

A doctor who specializes in brain and nervous system surgery. They perform operations like surgical clipping of aneurysms.

17. Interventional Neuroradiologist

A doctor trained to treat brain and spine conditions using image-guided techniques without traditional surgery. They often perform coiling and flow diversion.

18. Risk Factors

Traits or habits that increase your chances of developing or rupturing an aneurysm—such as smoking, high blood pressure, family history, or certain medical conditions.

19. Monitoring/Surveillance

When a small, unruptured aneurysm isn't treated right away, doctors may recommend regular imaging tests to keep watch over time.

20. Craniotomy

A surgical procedure where a section of the skull is temporarily removed so doctors can access and treat part of the brain.

You're Not Alone

Understanding these terms can make it easier to take an active role in your care or support someone you love. If anything feels confusing or overwhelming, don't hesitate to ask your doctor to walk you through it again—your comfort and clarity matter.

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