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6 Signs of a Brain Aneurysm Everyone Should Know

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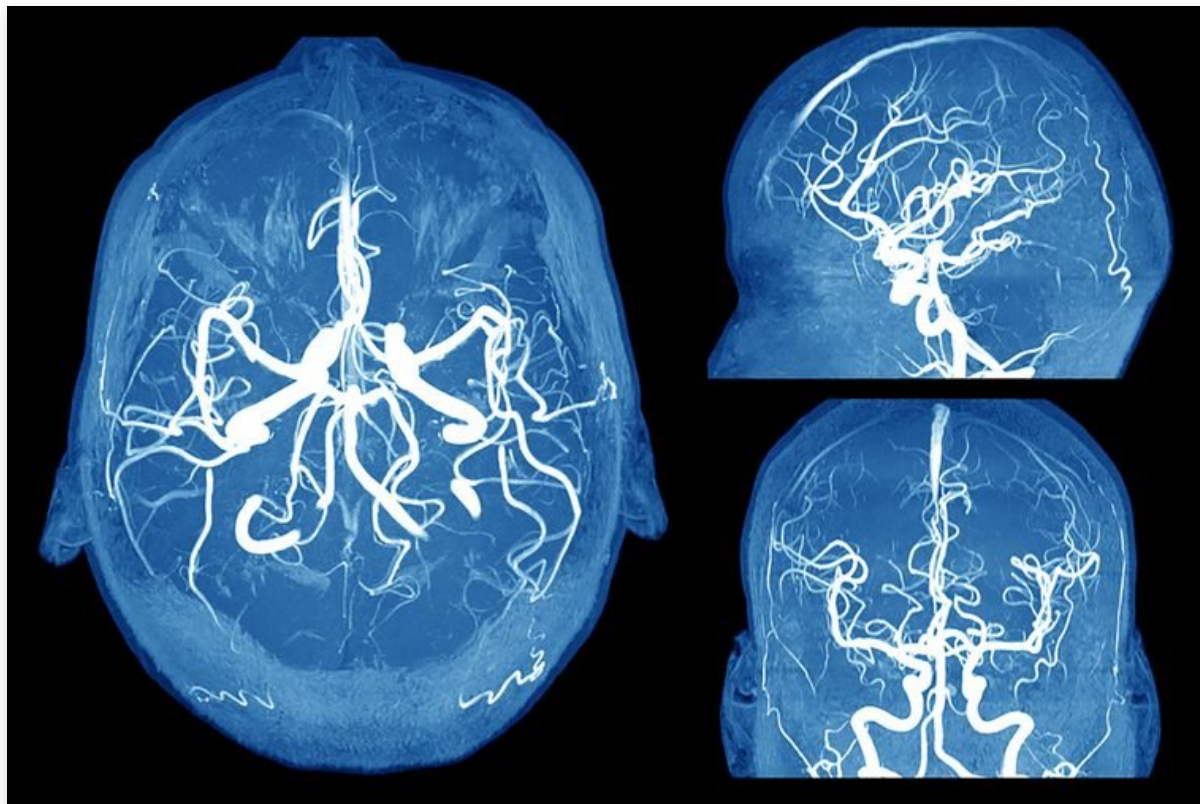
Judy Koutsky

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Medically reviewed by
Michael Spertus, MD

From headaches to numbness, knowing the signs of a brain aneurysm can save your life.



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What exactly is a brain aneurysm?

A **brain aneurysm** is a bulge in a blood vessel in the brain, according to the Mayo Clinic. It's been described as looking like a berry hanging from a stem. While most aneurysms don't rupture or create health problems, those that do trigger bleeding into the brain result in a hemorrhagic stroke. Strokes can lead to serious consequences and are life-threatening. Make sure you're aware of the **easy-to-miss signs of a stroke**.

And if you're experiencing any of the following symptoms, immediately call an ambulance or have someone take you to the ER

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Sudden, severe headache

If you have a ruptured aneurysm, you might get a terrible headache —unlike anything you've ever experienced before. "It's often described as the worst headache of your life," says [Mark McLaughlin](#), MD, FACS, who practices neurological surgery at Princeton Brain and Spine. "The leakage of blood is irritating to the brain coverings, causing the pain." It's different than regular headaches in that the

pain comes on very abruptly, and it's severe and intense. Headaches can often signal something serious, and here are **16 signs that your headache** could be something way worse.





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The onset of double vision or droopy eyelid

“This can be caused by an enlarging aneurysm that is pushing on the nerve that moves your eye,” says Dr. McLaughlin. If you suddenly have eye problems—double vision or your eyelids start to droop—you should call 911 immediately. “This is not a ‘wait and see what happens’ situation,” says Dr. McLaughlin. Getting help quickly can save your life—and so can knowing these [stroke symptoms in women](#) that they’re likely to ignore.





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Weakness or numbness on one side of the body or face

Another sign that you might have a ruptured aneurysm is when half your face or only one side of your body starts to go numb. “This comes from tiny clots leaking out of the [aneurysm](#) that are clogging small vessels going to important areas of the brain,” says Dr. McLaughlin. He explains that an aneurysm is like a blister with a thin wall that can pop and leak blood, wreaking havoc along the way.

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Gastrointestinal issues

“When you have a [ruptured] brain aneurysm, nausea or vomiting can take place,” says [Ronald Benitez](#), MD, chief of endovascular neurosurgery at Atlantic Health System’s Overlook Medical Center in Summit, New Jersey. “The bleeding and headache cause this.” The headache starts first, and then you may experience nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Other common symptoms include bleeding, dizziness, light sensitivity, and a stiff neck. “These are all related to the bleeding,” explains Dr. Benitez, “or, in some cases, pressure in the head or the aneurysm pressing on related structures.”



Risk factors

According to Dr. Benitez, risk factors that doctors and researchers believe contribute to the formation of brain aneurysms include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure or hypertension
- Family history of brain aneurysms
- Being over 40
- Gender—women have an increased incidence of aneurysms at a ratio of 3:2
- Having other disorders: Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome, Polycystic Kidney Disease, Marfan Syndrome, and Fibromuscular Dysplasia (FMD)
- Drug use, particularly cocaine
- Infection
- Tumors
- Traumatic head injury

While you can't avoid all of these risk factors, you do have control over some of them. Make sure that you also know the best foods to eat for **good brain health.**

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Treatment for brain aneurysm

“Some aneurysms that are not leaking can be watched,” says Dr. McLaughlin. “Others need to be packed off with minimally invasive surgery. Still others need an open operation to clip off the weakness.”

The proper course of action depends on the severity of the situation. “Treatments for an unruptured aneurysm include medications to control blood pressure and procedures to prevent a future rupture,” says Dr. McLaughlin. “Emergency medical care is needed for a ruptured aneurysm.” Whether or not you think you have an aneurysm, if you’re having unusual symptoms, you should see a doctor ASAP—

and also be aware of these 8 silent [signs you may have a brain tumor](#).

[+ Sources](#)

 Medically reviewed by [Michael Spertus, MD](#), on August 16, 2019

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[Judy Koutsky](#) is an award-winning writer and editor whose work has appeared in [over 30 publications](#) including *WebMD*, *Prevention*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Travel + Leisure*, *Redbook*, *Parents*, and *Scholastic*. Her article topics include health, psychology, parenting, lifestyle, and travel. She also works on custom publishing projects and has worked with companies such as Enfamil, Pampers, and Procter & Gamble. Judy's earlier work included management positions at Time Inc. and Hearst. She was previously Editorial Director of KIWI; Executive Editor of Parenting.com; and Editorial Director/GM of Hachette Filipacchi New Media.

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