

Information Leaflet for parents

Inguinal Hernia Repair

Produced February 2004

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This leaflet will help to explain what is involved when your baby/child comes into hospital for a hernia repair. We have written this leaflet for children with an inguinal hernia.

What is a hernia?

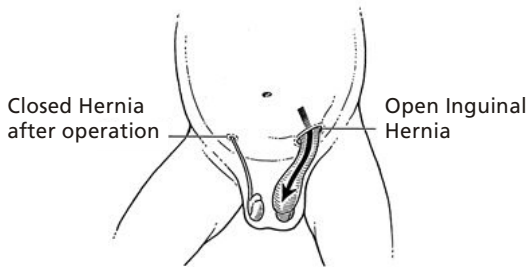
A hernia is a lump or swelling which happens when the bowel or intestine pushes through a weakness in the muscles of the abdominal wall. This is more common in boys and in babies that are born prematurely (early).

There are different types of hernia. This depends on where they are on your child's body. An Inguinal hernia is a swelling in the **groin** (area between the lower stomach and the top of the thigh). It is caused by a piece of bowel slipping down through a tube called the **inguinal canal**, towards or into the scrotum (testicular bag).

Why does it happen?

During pregnancy, the testes of male babies start to grow inside the abdomen. Around the seventh month of pregnancy they usually drop into the scrotum (testicular sac). To do this the testes have to go through a passage or tube called the inguinal canal. Normally this tube should close afterwards. Sometimes it does not close and may allow some of

the bowel to pass out of the abdomen down the inguinal canal towards or into the scrotum.



Could I have done anything to stop my child from developing a hernia?

No. There is no way of preventing a hernia

What are the facts about hernias?

- You may be able to see the lump more clearly when your baby/child is laughing, crying, coughing or straining to go to the toilet.
- When your baby/child is relaxed and lying down the lump may disappear or become smaller.
- Both children and adults can have hernias. Inguinal hernias can happen when your baby has just been born, or at any age. They are more common during the first year of life.

- Hernias occur in 1-3% of children. One in 50 boys will develop an inguinal hernia compared to 1 in 400 girls. Hernias are also more common on the right side rather than the left. 10% of children develop hernias on both sides.

How will my child's hernia be treated?

Your child will need an operation called a **herniotomy** to close the inguinal canal and stop the bowel slipping through.

- A hernia is not painful and most are **reducible**. This means that the bowel moves easily in and out of the inguinal canal and you can gently push it back to the normal body position. An urgent operation is not needed. You will be given a date to come into hospital for your child's operation.
- Some hernias are **irreducible**. This means that the bowel becomes stuck or difficult to gently push back to the normal body position, and the lump is swollen and fixed in place. If this happens a small piece of the intestine or bowel could have got caught and trapped in the hernia. This can cause pain and vomiting. The lump may become red and tender. **If your child develops any stomach pain or vomiting with a lump present, which will not reduce, you should contact your doctor straight away.**

- Your baby/child's herniotomy operation will be done under general anaesthetic (your child will be put to sleep). The operation will take about 30 minutes. Your baby/child will be away from the ward for about one and a half hours due to the anaesthetic and waking up time in recovery. You are able to go with your child to the anaesthetic room until they are asleep. Usually this kind of operation can be carried out in one day (day case surgery). We may need you to stay in hospital overnight if:
 - Your baby is under 3 months of age
 - Your baby was born premature (early)
 - Your baby/child has other medical problems

Where will my child's operation take place?

You will meet the doctors and nurses who will be looking after your baby/child in the day surgery unit. The operation will take place in the operating theatres in the hospital.

What does the operation involve?

- On the day of your child's operation the anaesthetist will meet with you to talk about your child's anaesthetic.
- When your child is asleep the anaesthetist will

either place a local anaesthetic into the area of the operation, or they will carry out a **caudal block**. Your child will be given a local anaesthetic into the lower back to numb the body from the hips down. This will be done to help stop your baby/child from feeling any pain and discomfort during their operation.

- The surgeon will repair the weakness in the muscles through a small incision (cut) and will push the bowel or intestine back into their normal place.
- The wound on the surface of the skin will be closed with dissolvable stitches or special glue. There will be no stitches showing on your baby/child's body. The surgeon will stitch the wound from the inside. These stitches will not need to be taken out as they are dissolvable/will disappear on their own

What are the benefits of hernia surgery?

- The bulge or lump where the hernia was situated will no longer be there. In a couple of days your child will be back to his/her normal self.
- After your baby/child's operation the piece of bowel will no longer be trapped in the hernia.

What are the risks of hernia surgery?

- The rate of complications with hernia repairs in babies and children are very low.
- There is a small risk of infection and/ or bleeding. The operation takes place very close to the blood vessels and a small tube called the “**vas**”. They are both attached to the testicle. There is a very small risk of damage to these during your baby/child's operation.
- There is a small risk of the hernia returning.
- There is a very small risk of the testicle getting smaller. This may be because of the hernia or the operation.
- There is a small risk with any anaesthetic but complications are rare.
- Your child may develop a headache, feel sick, dizzy or complain of a sore throat after coming round from the anaesthetic. These symptoms should go away quickly.
- If your child had a local anaesthetic placed into the lower back they may complain of numbness in their legs for a few hours after their operation. If so, your child may not be able to get out of bed straight away. Do not worry. This should not last for very long.

What happens after the operation?

- Your child may have bruising and tenderness on the wound and especially the scrotum (testicular bag) in boys. Do not worry. This is quite normal and will settle with time.
- Loose clothing will help to reduce any discomfort your baby/child may have. Your baby can still wear nappies as usual.
- Medicines such as paracetamol and Ibuprofen can be given within the first 24 hours after the operation to help reduce any pain.
- You will not need to see the doctor at the hospital again unless there are specific reasons.
- If you have any problems then please contact your GP (General Practitioner) who will be happy to give you advice and support.
- Your child's nurse will explain about looking after your baby/child at home.
- A discharge advice leaflet will be given to you when you leave the hospital telling you about schooling, sports etc.

Is there any other treatment my child can have other than an operation?

No. All inguinal hernias need an operation.

How will a hernia repair affect my child's future?

In most children there are no long-term effects of having a hernia repair. It is a very successful operation. However 10% of babies/children develop another hernia on the opposite side of the body. This is not related to having the operation. This figure can be doubled in babies that are born premature (early).

Data Protection Act 1998

We collect information about your child and family relevant to their diagnosis and treatment. We store it in written records and on computer. We may have to share some of your information with other people and organisations. If you have any questions and / or do not want us to share that information with others, please talk to the people looking after your child or contact the PALS Officer (Patient Advice and Liaison Service).

Please use this space to write down any notes or questions you might have

Further Information

We hope this leaflet will help you to understand the treatment offered to your child.

If you feel you need more information or have any concerns, it is important that you talk to your Consultant's Secretary,

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Tel:

They will pass your concerns onto the Consultant.

Information can also be found on the Internet. For more information you may find this website useful:

www.surgerydoor.co.uk

Internet access is available in the Child and Family Information Centre. This is on the Ground Floor of the hospital near the main Reception Desk.

This leaflet has been produced by the Action On General Surgery Programme.