

# Hernia repair

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## What is a hernia?

A hernia is a weakness in the muscles of the abdomen. Part of the bowel may push through the weak area, causing a lump under the skin. A hernia may also be called a rupture.

Some of the common places hernias can occur are:

- the groin, called an inguinal hernia – the most common type
- the navel, called an umbilical hernia
- at the incision from a previous operation, called an incisional hernia
- the upper thigh, called a femoral hernia – rare

## Why do I need a hernia repair?

Hernias can cause pain or discomfort. They may get bigger if they are not repaired. Sometimes the bowel (intestines) can become trapped in a hernia. This may cause the bowel to become blocked. Urgent surgery is then needed to fix this.

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## **What happens during a hernia repair?**

You may have a general or spinal anesthetic. The anesthesiologist will decide the type of anesthetic you need.

A general anesthetic will make you sleep during surgery. With a spinal anesthetic, you will be awake during surgery, but you cannot feel from the waist down.

There are 2 ways of repairing a hernia.

- In the laparoscopic method, the surgeon repairs the hernia through several very small incisions (cuts). The laparoscopic method may not be possible in all cases.
- In the open method, one larger incision is made at the site of the hernia.

In both methods, the bowel is put back in place and the weak area of the muscle wall is repaired. You may have a mesh sewn over the muscle to strengthen it even more.

## **How will I feel after surgery?**

You may have some pain from the incision(s) after surgery. You may also feel nauseated or sick to your stomach. Your nurse will give you medication that can help.

## **What will happen to me after surgery?**

After surgery, you will have an IV (intravenous) in your arm. The IV is used to give you fluids, until you are drinking well. Medications can also be given through the IV.

You will have a small gauze bandage or tape over your incision(s). If you had the open method of repair, there will be stitches or clips under the bandage. The incisions will take 3 to 5 weeks to fully heal.

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## When will I go home?

You may go home the same day as your surgery, or 1 to 2 days after your surgery.

**If you have had an inguinal hernia repair you will need to urinate before you can go home.**

## What should I eat?

Your nurse will tell you when you can start drinking fluids and eating after surgery. After the IV is taken out, you will need to drink plenty fluids over the next 24 hours.

When you are at home, eat your regular diet. It is important to prevent constipation, so that you will not strain to have a bowel movement. Straining puts pressure on your incision(s). Eating foods high in fibre and drinking extra fluids can make your bowel movements softer. Foods high in fibre are whole grain cereals and bread, bran, fruits and vegetables.

Pain medication that contains codeine such as Tylenol #2 or Tylenol #3 can cause constipation. If you are taking a medication with codeine, your doctor may order medication to help prevent or treat constipation.

## What activity can I do?

- It is important to rest for the first few days. From then on gradually return to normal activities, as you feel comfortable
- Your surgeon will advise as to:
  - when you can return to work.
  - resume exercising or heavy lifting

## How do I care for my incisions?

You can shower 24 hours after surgery. It is okay to remove the bandages. Leave the small white tape strips, if you have them, on the incision. After your shower, pat the incision dry. Cover the incision with a dry gauze dressing if needed.

Do not use soap or a washcloth on your incision. Do not soak in the tub until your incisions are fully healed, about one week.

Check your incision every day for:

- redness
- pus or drainage
- swelling or warmth

## Follow-up

Please make sure you have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery. At that time your incision(s) will be checked and any stitches or clips will be taken out.

## Call your surgeon if:

- you have not urinated for 8 hours after surgery
- you notice increased swelling, warmth or redness at your incision(s)
- you have persistent bleeding, discharge or a foul smell from your incision(s)
- your incision bulges or opens
- you have a fever of 38.5°C or 101°F or greater