

Hernia Repair

What is a hernia?

A hernia is when body tissue or an organ pushes through weak muscle or a tear, and out under the skin. Abdominal hernias are the most common, however there are a variety of different hernia types; inguinal, (through the groin) umbilical (close to or through the navel), hiatus (through the diaphragm), femoral (through the upper thigh), and incisional (through an old incision/scar). A hernia repair is a surgical procedure to push the hernia back into place.

Who can benefit from hernia repair surgery?

People who have a hernia may not need to undergo surgery – some may not even be aware of any symptoms. However a hernia can lead to a blockage in the bowel or blood supply, in which case it is imperative to have treatment. Symptoms can include a lump in the abdomen, groin or upper thigh area as well as pain when coughing, lifting, standing up or during sex.

Procedure

There are two types of hernia repair procedures, which take place under a local or general anesthetic:

- ✓ **Open hernia repair surgery** - An incision is made in the relevant area, allowing the surgeon to push the hernia back in. A type of synthetic mesh is placed over the weak part of the abdomen to strengthen the wall. The incision is then closed using dissolvable stitches.
- ✓ **Keyhole/Laparoscopic hernia repair surgery** - In this instance, between 1-4 small incisions are made in the appropriate area and a small camera mounted onto a tube (laparoscope) is inserted so that the surgeon can view the operation on a TV screen. Special instruments are then inserted through the incisions to push the hernia back in before the synthetic mesh is put in place. The incisions are then closed. In both cases tissue can grow normally around the synthetic mesh. There are advantages and disadvantages to both hernia repair options, and you should talk through these with your surgeon or doctor.

Recovery period

Recovery will depend on the type of hernia repair surgery you have undergone, and your age. Small children should be able to resume normal activities immediately but adults should avoid strenuous exercise for up to two months following the hernia operation. The wound should be kept clean and any dissolvable sutures will disappear at around 7-10 days following the procedure. If you experience any discomfort you can take painkillers to alleviate any pain. Constipation can cause a strain on the incision, and you should eat foods high in fiber to help avoid this.

Risks

Complications involving hernia repair surgery include infection, bleeding, breathing problems relating to the anesthetic, painful swelling, tissue damage, reoccurrence of the hernia and pain or numbness, among others. Obstruction of the intestines can be very painful and require surgery.