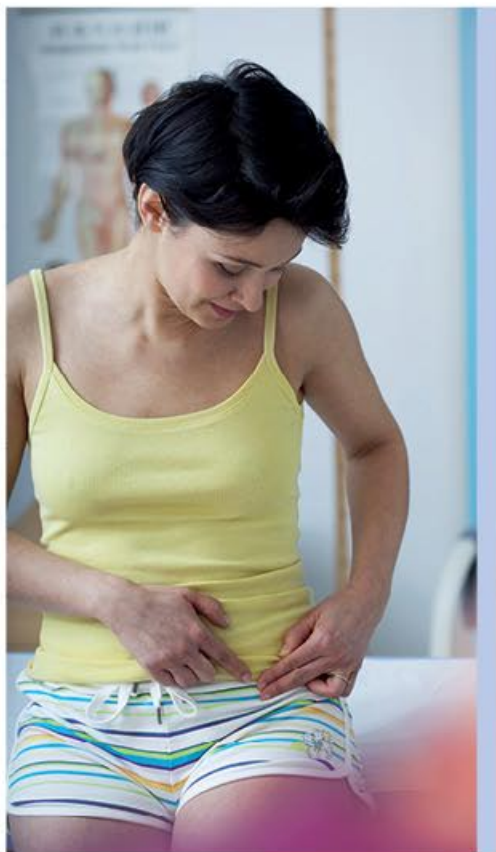


Hernia repair works

This age-old, highly inconvenient condition can happen to anyone, at any time and at any age. Thankfully, it is easy to resolve with a short procedure.

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A hernia occurs when an organ or fatty tissue contained by a muscle or membrane squeezes through a weak spot to produce a lump, most often at or near the abdominal wall. Unusual pressure at the stomach area, for instance, can cause portions of abdominal contents like intestine or abdominal fatty tissue to pop out from their natural encasement.

There are many kinds of hernias that occur in different ways and from various causes, although not all are painful. Some people experience slight to severe pain, while others present a combination of signs and symptoms, including fever, nausea, swelling, bleeding and even difficulty in breathing, eating and drinking. Ironically, those who fall ill rapidly and severely are more likely to seek immediate treatment, and have their condition rectified without delay.

The danger of untreated hernia is the potential risk of it becoming strangulated, which happens because

blood supply gets cut off from the constriction around the abdominal tear, causing tissue to die from oxygen starvation. Some hernias are also irreducible, where the protruding content cannot be pushed back into place, and these need careful evaluation from a doctor. The good news is that not all irreducible hernias are strangulated.

Most common hernias

• Groin hernia

One of the most common hernias is direct or indirect inguinal (groin) hernia. These make up 75% of all abdominal wall hernias, with men being up to 25 times more likely to suffer from them than women.

An indirect hernia follows the pathway created for the testicles to drop during foetal development. Even though the opening closes before birth, a weak spot remains for a potential hernia later in life. Direct inguinal hernia, on the other hand, is caused by a tear at the abdominal wall and usually occurs in the middle-aged and elderly, as the wall becomes thinner and muscles weaken with age.

• Femoral hernia

Femoral hernia is more common in women. It occurs at the canal where the femoral artery, vein and nerve leave the abdominal cavity to enter the thigh. This tiny space can become enlarged, allowing abdominal contents (usually intestine) to protrude into a bulge just below the groin crease. Femoral hernias are particularly at risk of becoming irreducible and strangulated.

Hernia repair

This is usually conducted under general anaesthetic, and includes options for open or laparoscopic surgery, depending on your doctor's assessment. Laparoscopic surgery is preferred if access to the problem site is uncomplicated, and patients experience little downtime and faster recovery.

The procedure involves a small incision at the navel area to inflate the abdomen with air. A laparoscope is then inserted for the surgeon to see the problem spot, followed by other small incisions to enter and repair the tear. The surgery ends with a mesh placed over the weakened area to reinforce the abdominal wall. The patient can go home the following day.

Hernia affects millions worldwide, but its repair is relatively straightforward. If you suspect you have hernia, consult a doctor and get the condition resolved early.

Causes of hernia

Anything that causes an increase in pressure in the abdomen can cause a hernia, including:

- carelessly lifting or jerking up heavy objects
- diarrhoea or constipation
- violent and continuous coughing or sneezing

While some hernias are present at birth, most occur later in life, and all of them will not go away in time or without clinical intervention.



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