

Repair of Epigastric, Umbilical or Incisional Hernia

Day Surgery Unit

Surgical Short Stay Unit



Patient information leaflet

What is an epigastric, umbilical or incisional hernia?

A hernia is a defect in the abdominal wall (stomach muscles). When there is increased pressure in the abdomen i.e. when coughing, lifting or straining, some of the bowel can be forced through the defect, causing a lump to appear. This can occur around the belly button (an umbilical hernia) or just below the ribs (an epigastric hernia).

The defect can be something you're born with, but it is often caused by frequent strains on the abdomen e.g. a physical job. Occasionally a hernia can develop through the site of previous abdominal surgery. This is known as an 'incisional' hernia.

What is an open hernia repair?

This procedure involves a cut in the abdomen over the hernia. The defect is repaired and often reinforced with a surgical mesh. The wound is closed with stitches.

What are the potential complications and risks?

Hernia repairs are generally very safe. However, there is a small risk of excessive bruising or swelling around the operation site. This may necessitate readmission to hospital for treatment.

Rarely, the body may react to the mesh used to reinforce the hernia repair, leading to a collection of fluid around the site. This problem usually resolves itself over time.

Are there any alternative treatments?

People with small hernias may go for some time without having surgery. Your hernia may grow larger over the years, causing more pain and discomfort. There is also the risk that protruding bowel may twist or become blocked, which is very serious. A surgical repair is the only way of getting rid of the hernia.

What will happen after my surgery?

Will the surgery hurt?

The surgeons will inject local anaesthetic around the operation site during the procedure so you should feel very little discomfort initially. However, once the local anaesthetic wears off, you will need to take painkillers for a few days to keep yourself comfortable. You will be provided with suitable painkillers before you leave the unit. Any medicines which you take home carry a prescription charge unless you are exempt.

Wound care

Keep your wound covered, clean and dry for about a week following surgery. You may replace the dressing with a clean one if required.

If your wound becomes swollen, red or very tender, bleeds or produces a discharge contact your GP for advice.

Washing

After a week you may bath/shower as normal. Ensure that the wound area is properly dried after bathing.

Mobility and exercise

Rest at home following your discharge from the unit. The following day, you should get out of bed and take some gentle exercise as comfort allows.

Avoid strenuous exercise, including gardening and sport, for the next two weeks.

Driving

Do not drive for 48 hours following your anaesthetic. You may drive when you can perform an emergency stop comfortably and safely, this may take one to two weeks. The Driving Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) advise you to check with your insurance company before you drive again.

Work

We strongly advise that you take at least a week off work, longer if your job involves lifting and carrying. The ward staff can provide you with a doctor' certificate for time off work if required.

Sexual intercourse

You may resume sexual relations when you have healed and feel comfortable and able.

Lifting and handling

Please avoid lifting and carrying objects that are heavier than two pounds/1 kg for the next week. This includes household cleaning, carrying, shopping and heavy gardening.

Where lifting is unavoidable (small children etc.) bend your knees and not your back. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart to keep you stable. Carry the object against your body. Bend at the knees to put the object down.

Will I require a follow-up appointment?

An outpatients appointment will be forwarded to you through the post.

Reference source

- www.nhs.uk/conditions/Umbilicalhernia/Pages/Whatisitpage.aspx

Contact details

If you require further advice, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Day Surgery Unit

Telephone: 01483 406783 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm)

Surgical Short Stay Unit

Telephone: 01483 406828 (Monday–Friday, 8am–6pm)

Out of hours advice

Call 111 (formerly NHS Direct)

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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