

# Adult Umbilical Hernia Repair



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## Patient Education

This educational information is to help you be better informed about your operation and empower you with the skills and knowledge needed to actively participate in your care.

## Keeping You Informed

Information that will help you further understand your operation and your role in recovery.

### Education is provided on:

Hernia Repair Overview .....	1
Condition, Symptoms, Tests.....	2
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**SURGICAL PATIENT  
EDUCATION PROGRAM**  
Prepare for the Best Recovery



Umbilical Hernia Location

## The Condition

An umbilical hernia occurs when a tissue bulges out through an opening in the muscles on the abdomen near the navel or belly button (umbilicus). About 10% of abdominal hernias are umbilical hernias.<sup>1</sup>

### Common Symptoms

- Visible bulge on the abdomen, especially when coughing or straining
- Pain or pressure at the hernia site

## Treatment Options

### Surgical Procedure

**Open hernia repair**—An incision is made near the site. Your surgeon will repair the hernia with mesh or by suturing (sewing) the muscle layer closed.

**Laparoscopic hernia repair**—The hernia is repaired with mesh or sutures inserted through instruments placed into small incisions in the abdomen.

### Nonsurgical Procedure

Watchful waiting is generally not recommended for adults with an umbilical hernia. You may be able to wait to repair umbilical hernias that are very small, reducible (can be pushed back in) and not uncomfortable.<sup>2</sup> There is a risk of the intestines being squeezed in the hernia pouch and blood supply being cut off (strangulation). If this happens, you will need an immediate operation.<sup>2</sup>

## Benefits and Risks of Your Operation

**Benefits**—An operation is the only way to repair a hernia. You can return to your normal activities and in most cases will not have further discomfort.

**Risks of not having an operation**—Your hernia may cause pain and increase in size. If your intestine becomes squeezed in the hernia pouch, you will have sudden pain, vomiting, and require an immediate operation.

**Possible risks include** return of the hernia; infection; injury to the bladder, blood vessels, intestines, or nerves; and continued pain at the hernia site.

## Expectations

**Before your operation**—Evaluation may include blood tests, urinalysis, and ultrasound. Your surgeon and anesthesia provider will discuss your health history, home medications, and pain control options.

**The day of your operation**—You will not eat or drink for six hours before the operation. Most often, you will take your normal medication with a sip of water. You will need someone to drive you home.

**Your recovery**—For a simple repair, you may go home the same day. You will need to stay longer for complex repairs.<sup>4</sup>

**Call your surgeon** if you have severe pain, stomach cramping, chills or a high fever (over 101°F or 38.3°C), odor or increased drainage from your incision, or no bowel movements for three days.

This first page is an overview. For more detailed information, review the entire document.

# The Condition, Symptoms, and Diagnostic Tests

## Keeping You Informed

### Who Gets an Umbilical Hernia?

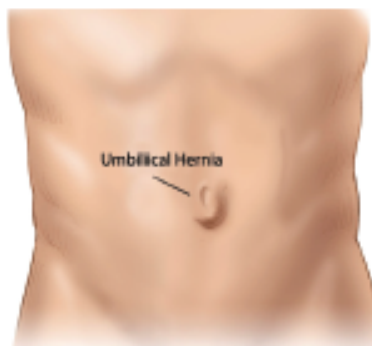
Ten percent of all hernias in adults are umbilical.<sup>2</sup> Umbilical hernias can suddenly bulge out. They occur more often in adults over 60 years when the muscles start to weaken.<sup>3</sup>

### Some risk factors are:

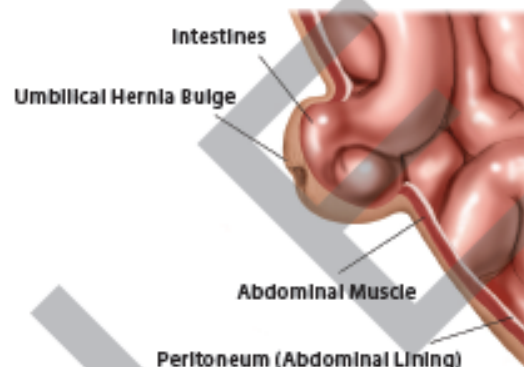
- Older age—muscles become weaker
- Overweight and obesity—increased weight places pressure on abdominal muscle
- Chronic straining
- Family history
- Ascites: excess fluid in the space between the tissues lining the abdomen and abdominal organs; may be due to alcoholism
- Pregnancy, particularly multiple pregnancies

### Pregnancy Considerations

The repair of umbilical hernias during pregnancy is considered only if the hernia becomes incarcerated or strangulated.<sup>2</sup>



Hernia Location



Internal View

## The Condition

An **umbilical hernia** occurs when part of the intestine or fatty tissue bulges through the muscle near the belly button (navel, umbilicus). Most (9 of 10) umbilical hernias in adults are acquired. This means that increased pressure near the umbilicus causes the umbilical hernia to bulge out.

A **reducible hernia** can be pushed back into the opening or decrease in size when lying flat. When intestine or abdominal tissue fills the hernia sac and cannot be pushed back, it is **irreducible or incarcerated**. A hernia is **strangulated** if the intestine is trapped in the hernia pouch and the blood supply to the intestine is cut off. **This is a surgical emergency.**<sup>2</sup>

**Herniorrhaphy** is the surgical repair of a hernia.

**Hernioplasty** is surgical repair of a hernia with mesh inserted to reinforce the weak area.

## Symptoms

The most common symptoms are:

- Bulge in the abdominal area that often increases with coughing or straining
- Pain or pressure at the hernia site
- Increasing sharp abdominal pain and vomiting can mean that the hernia is **strangulated**. **This is a surgical emergency and immediate treatment is needed.**

## Common Diagnostic Tests<sup>4</sup>

### History and Physical Exam

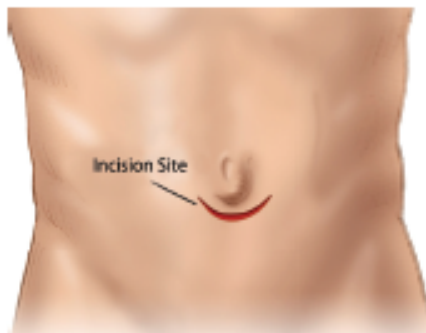
Checks for the presence of bulge

### Additional Tests (see Glossary)

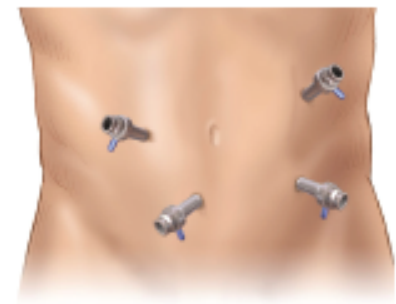
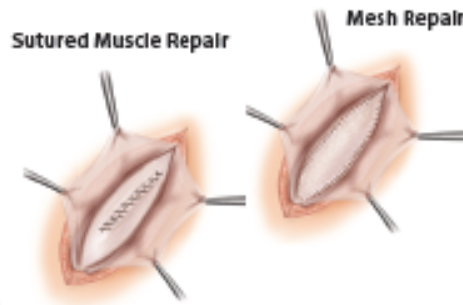
Other tests may include:

- Ultrasound
- Computerized tomography (CT) scan
- Blood tests
- Urinalysis
- Electrocardiogram (ECG)—for patients over 45 or if high risk of heart problems

# Surgical and Nonsurgical Treatment



Open Repair



Laparoscopic Repair

## Surgical Treatment

The type of operation depends on hernia size and location, and if it is a repeat hernia (recurrence). Your health, age, and the surgeon's expertise are also important. An operation is the only treatment for a hernia repair.

Your hernia can be repaired either as an **open** or **laparoscopic** approach. The repair can be done by using sutures only or adding a piece of mesh.

### Open Hernia Repair

The surgeon makes an incision near the hernia site, and the bulging tissue is gently pushed back into the abdomen. Sutures or mesh are used to close the muscle.

- For a suture-only repair: The hernia sac is removed. Then the tissue along the muscle edge is sewn together. The umbilicus is then fixed back to the muscle. This procedure is often used for small defects.<sup>6</sup>
- For an open mesh repair: The hernia sac is removed. Mesh is placed beneath the hernia site. The mesh is attached using sutures sewn into the stronger tissue surrounding the hernia. The mesh extends 3 to 4 cm beyond the edges of the hernia. The umbilicus is fixed back to the muscle. Mesh is often used for large hernia repairs and reduces the risk that the hernia will come back again.
- For all open repairs, the skin site is closed using sutures, staples, or surgical glue.
- An open repair may be done with local anesthesia and sedation given through an IV.

- Your surgeon may inject a local anesthetic around the hernia repair site to help control pain.
- With complex or large hernias, small drains may be placed going from inside to the outside of the abdomen.

### Laparoscopic Hernia Repair

The surgeon will make several small punctures or incisions in the abdomen. Ports or trocars (hollow tubes) are inserted into the openings. Surgical tools and a lighted camera are placed into the ports. The abdomen is inflated with carbon dioxide gas to make it easier for the surgeon to see the hernia. Mesh may be sutured or fixed with staples to the muscle around the hernia site. The port openings are closed with sutures, surgical clips, or glue.

## Nonsurgical Treatment

Watchful waiting is not usually recommended except for very small umbilical hernias.<sup>7</sup> A surgical repair is recommended for adults who have symptoms, incarceration, thinning of the skin, or uncontrollable ascites.

Because abdominal muscles weaken with age, the hernia can increase in size, and there is a risk of incarceration and strangulation.<sup>2</sup> Abdominal binders that apply pressure and push back the bulge will not repair the hernia.

## Keeping You Informed

### Open versus Laparoscopic Repair

There is no significant evidence on the best technique to repair an umbilical hernia, and more study is needed. The type of repair may also depend on the size of the hernia.

- When comparing open mesh repair with laparoscopic mesh repair, there is no difference in the length of hospital stay or recurrence rate. There is a slightly lower wound complication rate, including seromas, hematomas, and infection, with laparoscopic repair.<sup>8</sup> Both types of operations have similar long-term results.
- Open repairs can be done with local anesthesia instead of general anesthesia and are frequently done as outpatient procedures.
- Strangulated hernias may have to be repaired as an open approach.
- The use of mesh provides a stronger repair and decreases the rate of recurrence.<sup>9</sup>
- Suture repair will result in a small incision around the hernia site. Laparoscopic repairs usually have 3 to 4 smaller scars at the site of the entry ports.

# Risks of this Procedure

## Risks Based on the ACS Risk Calculator

Open and Laparoscopic Umbilical Hernia Surgery from the ACS Risk Calculator – April 7, 2016

Risks	Percent for Average Patient	Keeping You Informed
<b>Wound infection:</b> Infection at the area of the incision or near the organ where the surgery was performed	Open 1.2% Laparoscopic 0.9%	Antibiotics and drainage of the wound may be needed. Smoking can increase the risk of infection.
<b>Complications:</b> Including surgical infections, breathing difficulties, blood clots, renal (kidney) complications, cardiac complications, and return to the operating room	Open 2.2% Laparoscopic 3.4%	Complications related to general anesthesia and surgery may be higher in smokers, elderly and/or obese patients, and those with high blood pressure and breathing problems. Wound healing may also be decreased in smokers and those with diabetes and immune system disorders.
<b>Pneumonia:</b> Infection in the lungs	Open 0.1% Laparoscopic 0.2%	Movement, deep breathing, and stopping smoking can help prevent respiratory infections.
<b>Urinary tract infection:</b> Infection of the bladder or kidneys	Open 0.1% Laparoscopic 0.4%	Drinking fluids and catheter care decrease the risk of bladder infection.
<b>Venous thrombosis:</b> A blood clot in the legs that can travel to the lungs	Open 0.1% Laparoscopic 0.3%	Longer surgery and bed rest increase the risk. Getting up, walking 5 to 6 times per day, and wearing support stockings reduce the risk.
<b>Death</b>	Less than 1%	Your surgical team is prepared for all emergency situations.
Risks from Outcomes Reported in the Last 10 years of Literature	Percent for Average Patient	Keeping You Informed
<b>Immediate postoperative pain</b>	There is no difference in pain scores when comparing suture vs. mesh vs. laparoscopic repair by postoperative day 3 <sup>6</sup>	The laparoscopic approach avoids a long incision. There may be a feeling of tightness in your abdomen because the muscle has been pulled together. Your pain will be managed with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications and by resting and avoiding straining or lifting.
<b>Recurrence:</b> A hernia can recur after the repair	Suture repairs 0% to 14% Mesh repairs 0% to 3% <sup>10</sup>	The use of mesh or other type of patch repair appears to reduce the rate of recurrence. <sup>11</sup> Obesity, diabetes, and smoking can affect wound healing and increase recurrence rates. <sup>12</sup> Laparoscopic repair is recommended for recurrent hernias because the surgeon avoids previous scar tissue and larger hernias. <sup>13-14</sup> There is a higher rate of recurrence in older men with laparoscopic repair.
<b>Seroma:</b> A collection of clear/yellow fluid	<b>Open &amp; Laparoscopic</b> Suture repairs 50 of 1,000 Mesh repairs 60 of 1,000 <sup>9</sup>	Seromas can form around the former hernia site. Removal of fluid with a sterile needle may be required.
<b>Hematoma:</b> a collection of blood in the wound site or scrotum	No difference in the occurrence rate between suture and mesh repair	Hematomas are treated with anti-inflammatory medications, elevation, and rest. Most will resolve on their own over time.

*The data have been averaged per 1,000 cases*

The ACS Surgical Risk Calculator estimates the risk of an unfavorable outcome. Data is from a large number of patients who had a surgical procedure similar to this one. If you are healthy with no health problems, your risks may be below average. If you smoke, are obese, or have other health conditions, then your risk may be higher. This information is not intended to replace the advice of a doctor or health care provider. To check your risks, go to the ACS Risk Calculator at

<http://riskcalculator.facs.org>.

# Expectations: Preparation for Your Operation

## Preparing for Your Operation

### Home Medication

Bring a list of all of the medications, vitamins, and any over-the-counter medicines that you are taking. Your medications may have to be adjusted before your operation. Some medications can affect your recovery and response to anesthesia. Most often, you will take your morning medication with a sip of water.

### Anesthesia

Let your anesthesia provider know if you have allergies, neurologic disease (epilepsy, stroke), heart disease, stomach problems, lung disease (asthma, emphysema), endocrine disease (diabetes, thyroid conditions), or loose teeth; use alcohol or drugs; take any herbs or vitamins; or if you have a history of nausea and vomiting with anesthesia.

If you smoke, you should let your surgical team know, and you should plan to quit. Quitting before your surgery can decrease your rate of respiratory and wound complications. Quitting also increases your chances of staying smoke-free for life. Resources to help you quit may be found at [www.facs.org/patienteducation](http://www.facs.org/patienteducation) or [www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking](http://www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking).

### Length of Stay

If you have local anesthesia, you will usually go home the same day. You may stay overnight if you have a repair of a large or incarcerated hernia. A laparoscopic repair may result in a longer anesthesia time. Complications such as severe nausea and vomiting or an inability to pass urine may also result in a longer stay.

## The Day of Your Operation

- You should not eat or drink for at least 6 hours before the operation.
- You should bathe or shower and clean your abdomen, especially around the umbilical area, with a mild antibacterial soap.
- You should brush your teeth and rinse your mouth with mouthwash.
- Do not shave the surgical site; the surgical team will clip the hair near the incision site.

### What to Bring

- Insurance card and identification
- Advance directives (see glossary)
- List of medicines
- Loose-fitting, comfortable clothes
- Slip-on shoes that don't require that you bend over
- Leave jewelry and valuables at home

### What You Can Expect

An identification (ID) bracelet and allergy bracelet with your name and hospital/clinic number will be placed on your wrist. These should be checked by all health team members before they perform any procedures or give you medication. Your surgeon will mark and initial the operation site.

### Fluids and Anesthesia

An intravenous line (IV) will be started to give you fluids and medication. For general anesthesia, you will be asleep and pain free during the operation. A tube may be placed down your throat to help you breathe during the operation. For spinal anesthesia, a small needle with medication will be placed in your back alongside your spinal column. You will be awake during the operation but pain-free.

### After Your Operation

You will be moved to a recovery room where your heart rate, breathing rate, oxygen saturation, blood pressure, and urine output will be closely watched. Be sure that all visitors wash their hands.

### Preventing Pneumonia and Blood Clots

Movement and deep breathing after your operation can help prevent postoperative complications such as blood clots, fluid in your lungs, and pneumonia. Every hour, take 5 to 10 deep breaths and hold each breath for 3 to 5 seconds.

When you have an operation, you are at risk of getting blood clots because of not moving during anesthesia. The longer and more complicated your surgery, the greater the risk. This risk is decreased by getting up and walking 5 to 6 times per day, wearing special support stockings or compression boots on your legs, and, for high-risk patients, taking a medication that thins your blood.

## Questions to Ask

### About my Operation:

- What are the side effects and risks of anesthesia?
- What technique will be used to repair the hernia? (Laparoscopic or open? Mesh or with sutures?)
- What are the risks of this procedure for me?
- Will you be performing the entire operation yourself?
- What level of pain should I expect, and how will it be managed?
- How long will it be before I can return to my normal activities (work, driving, lifting)?

# More Information

For more information, please go to the American College of Surgeons Patient Education website at [www.facs.org/patienteducation](http://www.facs.org/patienteducation). For a complete review of hernia repair, consult *Selected Readings in General Surgery, "Hernia" 2015 Vol. 41 No. 7* at [www.facs.org/SRGS](http://www.facs.org/SRGS).

## GLOSSARY

**Abdominal X ray:** Checks for any loops of bowel or air-filled sacs.

**Abdominal ultrasound:** Sound waves are used to determine the location of deep structures in the body. A hand roller is placed on top of clear gel and rolled across the abdomen.

**Ascites:** Excess fluid in the space between the tissues lining the abdomen and abdominal organs; may be due to alcoholism or liver disease.

**Advance directives:** Documents signed by a competent person giving direction to health care providers about treatment choices.

**Blood tests:** Tests usually include a Chem-6 profile (sodium, potassium, chloride, carbon dioxide, blood urea nitrogen and creatinine) and complete blood count (red blood cell and white blood cell count).

**Computerized tomography (CT) scan:** A diagnostic test using X ray and a computer to create a detailed, three-dimensional picture of your abdomen. A CT scan normally takes about 15 minutes or less.

**Electrocardiogram (ECG):** Measures the rate and regularity of heartbeats, the size of the heart chambers and any damage to the heart.

**General anesthesia:** A treatment with certain medicines that puts you into a deep sleep so you do not feel pain during surgery.

**Hematoma:** A collection of blood that has leaked into the tissues of the skin or in an organ, resulting from cutting in surgery or the blood's inability to form a clot.

**Incarceration:** The protrusion or constriction of an organ through the wall of the cavity that normally contains it.

**Local anesthesia:** The loss of sensation only in the area of the body where an anesthetic drug is applied or injected.

**Seroma:** A collection of serous (clear/yellow) fluid.

**Strangulation:** Part of the intestine or fat is squeezed in the hernia sac, and blood supply to the tissue is cut off.

**Urinalysis:** A visual and chemical examination of the urine, most often used to screen for urinary tract infections and kidney disease.

## REFERENCES

The information provided in this report is chosen from recent articles based on relevant clinical research or trends. The research below does not represent all that is available for your surgery. Ask your doctor if he or she recommends that you read any additional research.

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## DISCLAIMER

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