

Hernia Repair (Adult)

This handout explains what a hernia is and what you can expect after surgery.

There are many types of hernias. A hernia is a bulge where bowel pushes through a weak area in the groin, abdomen (ventral or incisional), or your navel. You may have your hernia fixed using an open approach or laparoscope.

An **open hernia** repair has one incision and you have more pain.

A **laparoscopic hernia repair** has a few small incisions or “port” sites instead of one large incision. You may have less pain.

Incision Care

Expect the incision to be pink, swollen and numb at first. If you are a man who had an inguinal hernia, your penis may be bruised and scrotum may be bruised and swollen. This is normal.

Follow the incision care instructions below.

1. Look If you notice signs of infection, call your doctor.
2. After at least 24 hours, you may shower and let soap and water run over the incisions. Do **not** scrub your incisions.
3. Do not soak in a hot tub, bath, or swim until it is healed. This may be at least 2 weeks.
4. If surgical “glue” was used to close your incisions, it will fall off on its own – don’t peel it off.

Pain Relief

If your hernia was fixed using laparoscope, you may have some pain in your shoulder, neck or back. This is caused by the gas used to inflate your abdomen during surgery. It

will only last for 1 – 2 days. Heating pads will help. Please use heat on the lowest setting, for no more than 15 minutes at a time.

It’s normal to have pain, swelling, and numbness of the incision and area around it.

You may use an ice pack on your incision for 20 minutes, then off for 20 minutes to decrease pain and swelling. If you don’t have an ice pack, make one by wrapping a bag of frozen peas in a towel. Males may also use a rolled up wash cloth or towel to elevate a swollen scrotum. Males should also wear support briefs instead of boxer shorts.

Activity

After surgery, talk to your doctor about how much weight you can lift and when you can return to work. These guidelines will depend on how your hernia was fixed.

Factors that will affect this are:

- If mesh was used.
- If you had an open hernia.
- If you had a laparoscopic hernia.

Your doctor will talk with you about when you can get back to your normal routine. You will have a follow-up visit in 7 – 14 days.

Standing or laying down puts less strain on your wound than sitting upright. You may feel more comfortable sitting in a reclining chair.

You may resume sex when you feel ready, which may not be for 2 to 3 weeks.

Do not drive for 1 week after surgery. Do not drive if you are taking opioid pain pills or if you have trouble sitting for a long time.

Watch for any new bulge at your wound site.

Do not strain during a bowel movement or hold your breath.

While coughing, sneezing, laughing or during a bowel movement, firmly press on your wound with your hand for extra support.

Preventing Constipation

Opioid pain pills will cause constipation. You may want to increase fiber in your diet slowly to avoid bloating and gas. You may need to use a stool softener and/or a bulk fiber laxative to prevent problems. Buy these over the counter at your drugstore.

Eat a balanced diet each day to include:

- 8-10 (8 oz) glasses of fluids a day (water, juice, tea, etc.).
- At least 4 servings of fruits or vegetables.
- At least 2-4 servings of whole grain bread or cereal.

When to Call

- Increased swelling
- No bowel movement 3 days after surgery (you may need a laxative)
- Fever by mouth over 101.5°F for 2 readings, 4 hours apart
- Excess scrotal swelling or pain (some testicular and scrotal swelling is common)
- Trouble passing urine
- Increased redness or warmth of wound
- Pus-like drainage or blood from wound
- Pain not controlled by pain pills
- Rapid or excess bruising (some bruising is normal)

Who to Call

Surgery Clinic

Monday – Friday, 8:00 am – 4:30 pm

608-263-7502 or **1-800-323-7502**

After hours, weekends, or holidays you will reach a paging operator. Ask for the doctor on call.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 5/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#7925.