Hernia Repair (Adult)

This *Health Facts for You* explains what a hernia is and what you can expect after surgery.

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

An **open hernia** repair has one incision. You may have more pain with this repair.

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 had a hernia in the groin, it's normal for the area around your genitals to be bruised and for the scrotum, if you have one, to be bruised and swollen.

Follow the incision care instructions below.

1. 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, pat dry.
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. **Do not** peel it off.

Pain Relief
It's normal to have pain, swelling, and numbness around the incision site.

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 and walking will help. Please use heat on the lowest setting, for no more than 15 minutes at a time.

You may use an ice pack on your incision for 20 minutes, then off for 20 minutes. This decreases pain and swelling. If you don't have an ice pack, make one by wrapping a bag of frozen vegetables in a towel.

To elevate a swollen scrotum, you may use a rolled-up washcloth or towel. You 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 repair.
- If you had a laparoscopic hernia repair.

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 until you are cleared by your surgeon. 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. Try to increase your fiber intake to prevent constipation. You may want do this slowly to avoid bloating and gas. You may need to use a stool softener and/or a bulk fiber laxative to prevent problems. You can buy these at your local 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 lease 2–4 servings of whole grain bread or cereal.

When to Call
Call if you notice:

- Increased swelling
- No bowel movement within 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
If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

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 © 12/2024 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#7925.