

Different Types of Hernias

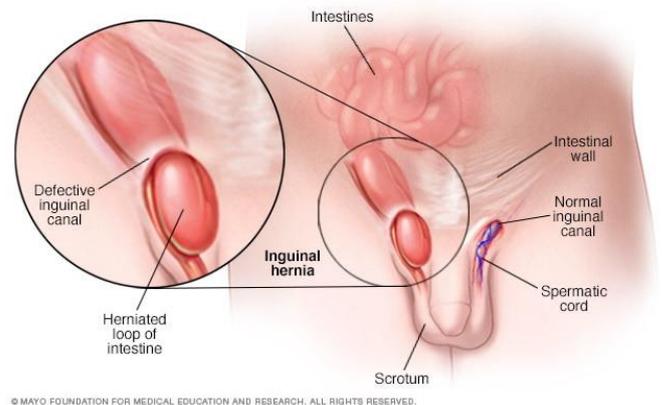
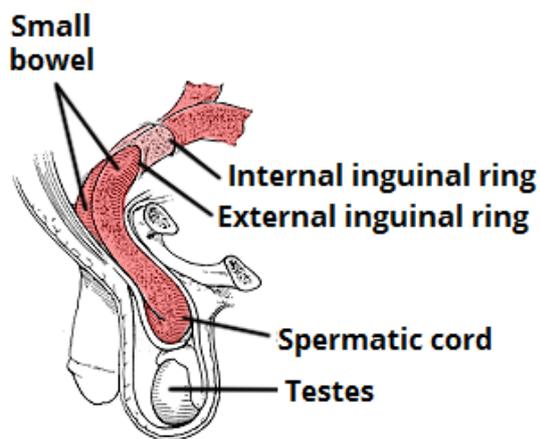
A hernia occurs when an organ or fatty tissue squeezes through a weak spot or tear in surrounding muscle or connective tissue (fascia) forming a balloon like sac. This sac can be seen as a bulge under the skin when standing or exerting pressure (lifting heavy object or coughing) and usually disappears when lying flat. A hernia is caused by a combination of pressure and an opening or weakness in the muscle. A hernia can develop in various places in the abdomen.

A hernia can be present at birth, but most develop over time. Hernia's can be exacerbated by a chronic cough, constipation or heavy lifting, and usually get worse with time.

The majority of hernias occur in the groin area (inguinal and femoral hernias).

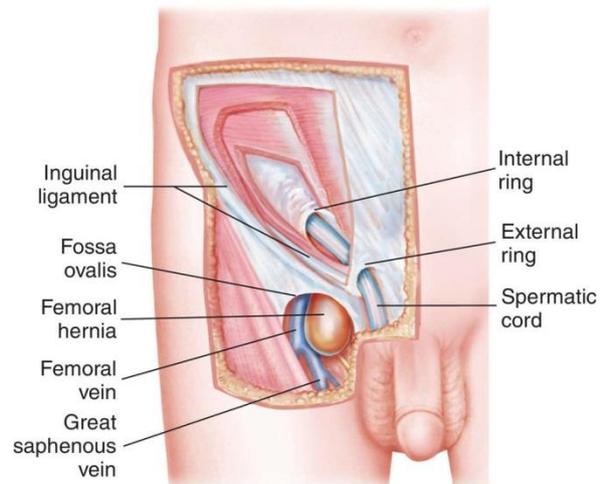
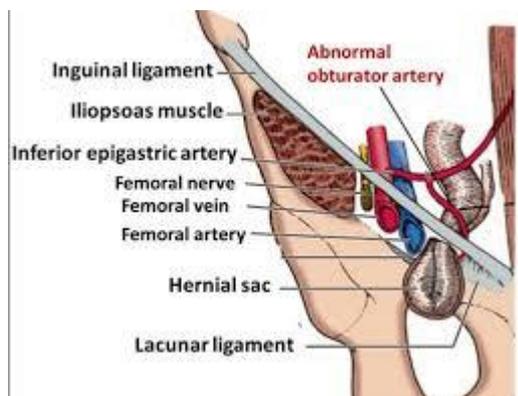
Inguinal Hernia

An inguinal hernia appears as a bulge in the groin region and is more common in men than women. In males, an inguinal hernia can descend into the scrotum. You can get two types of inguinal hernias – direct and indirect. Both can enlarge to contain abdominal fat or bowel. Inguinal hernia's generally cause discomfort and tenderness and may cause sharp pain with increased activity and relief with rest. It is common that the pain will tend to be worse in the evening after a full day of activity compared to the morning.



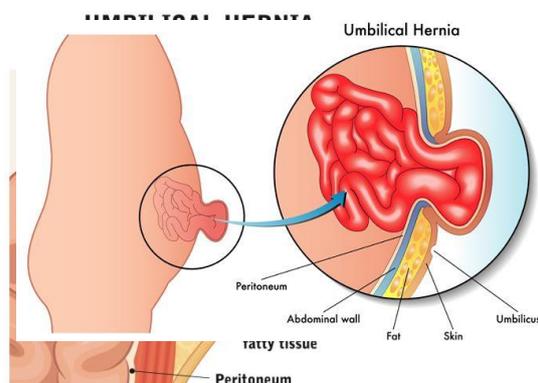
Femoral Hernia

A femoral hernia appears as a bulge in the upper thigh, where the leg joins the body. These are more common in women. This hernia can contain a loop of intestines or another part of the abdominal contents, which have been pushed through the femoral canal (an anatomical compartment in the thigh). A femoral hernia can cause abdominal pain, nausea and vomiting, as well as discomfort when standing or lifting heavy objects.



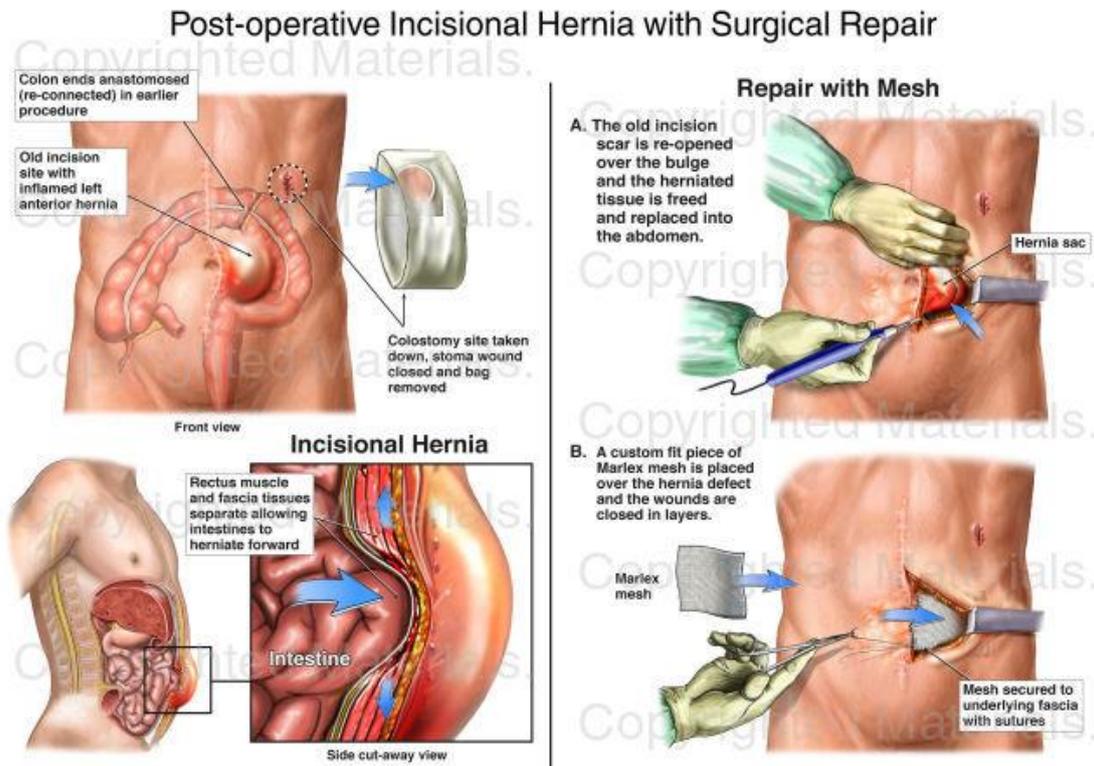
Umbilical Hernia

An umbilical hernia is a small bulge that develops around the umbilicus (belly button). An umbilical hernia can occur in children and adults. In children, it usually resolves itself by the time the child is 2-3 years old. In adults, an umbilical hernia is not dangerous in itself but there is a risk that it will become obstructed by other organs which can lead to serious complications. An umbilical hernia may not be painful but if left without surgical intervention it can become larger and uncomfortable.



Incisional Hernia

Incisional hernias can occur when previous surgical incisions made in the abdomen have not healed properly and where there is a weakening of the abdominal wall muscle due to the surgical incision. They can be large or small and can cause pain or discomfort. Risk is more in those who have had multiple surgeries and those who perform activities that put more stress on the abdomen. They usually occur within 3-6 months after surgery, but can occur at any-time after surgery.



Symptoms and Treatment of a Hernia

The symptoms of a hernia and type of hernia that a person can have vary from person to person. Commonly, you will experience some of the following:

Pain, tenderness or aching

Discomfort or pain can occur in the region of the hernia, particularly after completing activities such as lifting objects, walking a good distance and going to the gym.

A visible lump or bulge

This lump or bulge disappears when you are lying down or increases in size when standing up, straining or coughing.

Reducible versus non-reducible

If the lump can be gently pushed back into the body, it is known as a reducible hernia. Generally this means that it is not obstructed by other organs and poses no serious complications at this stage. However if the lump resists when it is pushed, it is known as a non-reducible hernia which can mean that it may be constricted with bowel or strangulated. If your hernia is non-reducible it is very important to let your surgeon's rooms know when making your appointment.

Surgery to Repair Hernia

A hernia repair is one of the most commonly performed general operation and can be performed as a day procedure, but sometimes requires an overnight stay in the hospital. The operation may be performed as an 'open' or 'laparoscopic' surgery.

Open Hernia Repair

In an open hernia repair, a cut is made in the groin area and the lump or bulge will be returned to the normal position within the abdominal cavity. The use of mesh will safely reinforce the area of weakness and strengthen the abdominal wall. The mesh becomes part of the body and reduces the risk of hernia recurring.

Laparoscopic Hernia Repair

A laparoscopic hernia repair is a minimally invasive technique where three incisions will be made into the abdomen to repair the hernia. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) gas is blown into the abdominal cavity to improve visibility for the surgeon. A laparoscope will be inserted into one of the incisions sites that will project a visual image of the abdominal cavity onto a monitor. Two surgical instruments will be inserted through the other incision ports to reduce the hernia. The use of mesh safely reinforces the area and strengthens the abdominal wall. The mesh becomes part of the body and reduces the risk of the hernia recurring.



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