

Hernia Surgery: Umbilical Hernia Repair (Child)



Hernias in children are common. They're caused by a defect in the belly (abdominal) wall. They are present at birth. Most often, the hernia forms in the groin or umbilical area. It can often be felt as a bulge under the skin. Childhood hernias can be safely fixed using outpatient (same-day) surgery. Best of all, most children get better quickly with only minor discomfort.

Questions you may have

It's normal to have concerns about your child's surgery. Here are answers to some common questions:

- Is surgery safe? Yes. Complications from hernia surgery are rare. In fact, most children get back to normal in a very short time.
- Will my child be in pain during surgery? No. Your child will be given medicines that make them sleep during surgery. Some mild discomfort after the operation is normal.
- Is surgery always needed? Umbilical hernias in infants may get better without surgery. But fixing the hernia is safer than leaving it untreated. Umbilical hernias in older children are often fixed with surgery.

Preparing your child for surgery

Follow your healthcare provider's advice to help get your child ready for surgery. You may be asked to:

- Tell the healthcare provider about any medicines your child takes, including children's pain relievers.
- Be with your child during tests. These may include urine and blood tests.
- Follow any directions your child is given for taking medicines and for not eating or drinking before surgery.

The day of surgery

You'll meet with the anesthesiologist or nurse anesthetist. They will talk with you about the anesthesia used to prevent pain during surgery. Your child will be given an IV (intravenous) line to give fluids and medicines. This may happen in the operating room while your child is getting mask anesthesia so they sleep during the surgery. The type of surgery your child has depends on where the hernia is. If your child has a related problem, such as an undescended testicle, it may also be fixed at the same time as the hernia.

Repairing an umbilical hernia

A cut is made under the navel. Any protruding tissue is pushed back into place. The hernia sac is taken out. The belly wall is then closed with sutures.

Your child's recovery

Your child can likely go home the same day as surgery. Don't worry if you notice some swelling or bruising. This is normal and should go away in a short time. To help speed recovery, encourage your child to move around. But children should avoid rough play for about a week. After that, it's OK to let them get back to doing things they enjoy. If you have questions or concerns, be sure to talk with the healthcare provider during follow-up visits.

What to look for after surgery

Hernia surgery for children is safe. But it does have some risks. These include:

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Inability to urinate
- The hernia happening again
- Bowel or bladder injury
- Problems with anesthesia
- No bowel movements

When to call the healthcare provider

After surgery, call your child's healthcare provider if your child has:

- A large amount of swelling or bruising
- Fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher, or as directed by your child's healthcare provider
- Increasing redness or drainage of the incision
- Bleeding
- Increasing pain
- Nausea or vomiting

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