

Hernia repair

inguinal hernia repair

After the operation

You can usually go home the same day as the operation.

After the operation it's normal to have:

- some bleeding from the wound for a couple of days
- pain around the wound for a few days
- bruising or swelling around the wound or genitals for a couple of weeks
- bloating or shoulder pain for a couple of days if you had keyhole surgery (this is caused by the air that was pumped into your tummy)
- numbness below the wound – usually the feeling slowly comes back, but sometimes a small area of numbness remains

Recovering from an inguinal hernia repair

It usually takes up to 4 to 6 weeks to recover from an inguinal hernia repair, but it can take longer.

There are some things you can do to help you recover.

Do

take painkillers such as [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#) to ease any pain

keep moving and do gentle exercise such as walking – slowly increase your activity as you recover

stay off work for usually at least 1 to 2 weeks (or up to 6 weeks if your job involves heavy lifting) – you can speak to your surgeon about how long you need off

keep the wound covered, clean and dry while it heals

place your hand over your wound if you cough or sneeze to help ease any pain

Don't

do not do any heavy lifting or strenuous activity for at least 4 to 6 weeks

do not have a bath or swim until your wound has healed (this usually takes around 2 weeks) – you can usually shower from a few days after your surgery if you have a waterproof dressing

do not drive after surgery – check with your healthcare team and insurance provider when you are allowed to drive again

Possible complications of an inguinal hernia repair

As with any operation, complications can happen during or after an inguinal hernia repair. Your doctor will explain the risks to you before the procedure.

Complications are uncommon but include:

- your wound becoming infected
- a lump or swelling that develops where the hernia was that can last a few weeks or months
- a large painful bruise in the top of your inner thigh (groin) or genitals that can last a few months
- pain or numbness in your groin that may last longer than 3 months
- the hernia coming back
- damage to the area around the hernia such as the bowel, blood vessels or bladder
- a blood clot, [DVT \(deep vein thrombosis\)](#) or [pulmonary embolism](#)

Femoral hernia repair

Looking after yourself

An adult must stay with you for the first 24 hours after your operation, in case you experience any problems.

If you're still in pain after going home, continue taking painkillers as advised by the hospital. Applying gentle pressure to your wound using your hand or a small pillow

can make coughing, sneezing and moving between sitting and standing more comfortable.

Make sure you follow the instructions your nurse gave you about caring for your wound, hygiene and bathing.

Straining on the toilet because of [constipation](#) can cause pain around your wound. You can reduce your risk of constipation by drinking lots of fluids and eating plenty of vegetables, fruit and high-fibre foods, such as brown rice, wholemeal bread and pasta. A mild, over-the-counter [laxative](#) may also help.

Activities

If the operation was carried out under a [general anaesthetic](#), your co-ordination and reasoning may be affected for a short time. Avoid drinking alcohol, operating machinery or signing legal documents for 24 to 48 hours after any operation involving general anaesthetic.

Over time, you can gradually return to your normal activities as soon as you're able to do them without feeling any pain.

Most people are able to do light activities, such as shopping, after 1 or 2 weeks. You should also be able to return to work after 2 or 3 weeks, although you may need more time off if your job involves manual labour.

Gentle exercise, such as walking, can help the healing process, but you should avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activities for about 6 weeks. You should also not do sports like football and rugby for at least 8 weeks and 12 weeks respectively.

You may find sex painful or uncomfortable at first, but it's usually fine to have sex when you feel you are ready.

Driving

Speak to the medical professional in charge of your care for advice about when you can drive. It's usually advisable to avoid driving until you are able to perform an emergency stop without feeling any pain or discomfort. You can practise this without starting your car.

It will usually be 1 or 2 weeks before you reach this point after having keyhole surgery, although it may take longer after open surgery.

It's usually recommended that you contact your car insurance company before starting driving again.

When to call a doctor

Call your surgeon if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- a persistent high temperature
- persistent or heavy bleeding
- increased swelling or pain in your tummy
- pain that is not relieved by painkillers
- persistent nausea or vomiting
- chills
- persistent coughing or shortness of breath
- increasing redness around your incisions
- difficulty peeing

Umbilical hernia repair

It's usually possible to go home the same day as having an umbilical hernia repair.

It's normal to feel sore and uncomfortable immediately after surgery. [Local anaesthetic](#), which numbs the area, will be injected before the end of the operation to reduce the pain. Painkillers will also be provided.

Your child may be sleepy or cry more than usual after the operation. This is normal and will pass.

Most adults and children can go home a few hours after surgery when they've had something to eat and drink.

An overnight stay in hospital is usually only recommended for people with other medical problems, or people who are unable to keep food and drink down.

Follow-up appointment

Before being discharged from hospital, you'll be told whether you or your child needs to have a follow-up appointment.

If an appointment is needed, you'll receive a letter or email with the details of the date and time.

At home

You may have bruising and tenderness around the wound during your recovery at home. This is normal and usually settles within about a week. However, the swelling may not go down for several weeks.

Hospital staff will advise you about taking painkillers to relieve any discomfort. You can give your child painkillers such as paracetamol and ibuprofen. Children under 16 must not be given [aspirin](#).

Wearing loose clothing may help reduce any discomfort, but you should be able to wear trousers or a skirt as normal.

Make sure you follow the instructions you were given before leaving hospital about hygiene, caring for the wound and bathing.

Straining on the toilet because of [constipation](#) can cause pain around the wound. Drinking lots of fluids and eating plenty of vegetables, fruit and high-fibre foods such as brown rice, wholemeal bread and pasta can help reduce the chances of this occurring.

Activities

Your surgical team will be able to give you a good idea about how long it takes to recover from surgery.

If the operation was carried out under a [general anaesthetic](#), your co-ordination and reasoning may be affected for a short time. Adults should therefore avoid drinking alcohol, driving, operating machinery or signing legal documents for 24 hours after the procedure.

Normal activities can gradually be resumed over time when they can be carried out without feeling any pain. The latest hernia repair techniques usually allow you to return to normal activities within 2 weeks.

Gentle exercise, such as walking, can help the healing process. Heavy lifting and strenuous activities should be avoided for about 4 to 6 weeks.

Work and school

You may be advised to keep your child off school for about a week to give them time to recover from the anaesthetic and the operation.

Adults who have surgery should be able to return to work after about a week. If your job involves manual labour, you can usually return to work within 2 weeks.

Driving

You must not drive for 24 hours after having a general anaesthetic.

Check with your healthcare team and insurance company about when it's OK for you to start driving after a hernia repair. Do not drive until you're able to control your vehicle.

When to get medical advice

Call a GP or 111 urgently if any of the following symptoms develop after surgery for an umbilical hernia:

- persistent high temperature
- bleeding from the wound
- increased swelling or pain in the abdomen
- pain that isn't relieved by painkillers
- persistent vomiting
- chills
- persistent coughing or shortness of breath
- increasing redness around your incisions
- difficulty passing urine

Postoperative Restrictions

After surgery, most patients will be asked to avoid lifting anything heavier than 15 pounds for the first two weeks, though more complicated patients may have differing limitations. Different patients will have individual restrictions, but in general, you should be as active as your provider permits. If you have any questions or health concerns after your surgery, contact your provider right away.

Possible Complications

Advances in technology and medical knowledge have lowered the risk of complications after hernia surgery substantially, and our experts use the latest practices and equipment to provide the safest procedures possible. However, there is still a chance of recurrence or infection after surgery. Obesity and smoking increase these risks substantially, and many hernia experts will require patients to lose weight and commit to smoking cessation before surgery, unless tissue is incarcerated or strangulated. Additionally, activities that increase intra-abdominal pressure at the hernia repair site should be avoided, as even a persistent cough or constipation can increase the risk of recurrence. Chronic pain is also a risk. Although most pain will go away with conservative management, in rare cases, further surgery may be necessary to alleviate the pain. A healthy lifestyle with regular exercise and regular checkups with your primary care provider will also help reduce the risks involved with any surgery.
