

Paraumbilical and umbilical hernia repair

What are paraumbilical and umbilical hernias?

Your abdominal cavity contains your intestines and other structures. These are protected by your abdominal wall, which is made up of four layers.

Weak spots can develop in the layer of muscle, resulting in the contents of your abdomen, along with the inner layer, pushing through your abdominal wall. This produces a lump called a hernia.

Paraumbilical and umbilical hernias are common as there is a natural weakness in the wall of your abdomen at your umbilicus.

What will happen if I decide not to have the operation or the operation is delayed?

Occasionally, the hernia can get larger with time. It can also be dangerous because your intestines or other structures within your abdomen can get trapped and have their blood supply cut off (strangulated hernia). The symptoms that may suggest a strangulated hernia are:

- severe pain
- a hernia that will not disappear when you lie down
- vomiting

What does the operation involve?

The operation is usually performed under general anaesthetic but various anaesthetic techniques are possible.

The operation usually takes about 30-45 minutes. Your surgeon will make a cut near your umbilicus. They will free up the 'hernial sac', place the contents back inside your abdomen and remove the hernial sac. Your surgeon will close the weak spot with strong stitches or a synthetic mesh and close your skin.

How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are overweight.

What complications can happen?

General complications of any operation

- bleeding
- blood clot in your leg
- blood clot in your lung
- infection of the surgical site (wound)
- chest infection

Specific complications of this operation

- developing a collection of blood (haematoma) or fluid (seroma) under your wound
- injury to your bowel
- infection of the mesh
- removing your umbilicus (belly button)

Consequences of this procedure

- pain
- unsightly scarring of your skin

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day.

Increase how much you walk around over the first few days.

You should be able to return to work after 2 to 4 weeks, depending on how much surgery you need and your type of work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a full recovery and can return to normal activities. However, the hernia can come back.

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