

Laparoscopic Incisional Hernia Repair

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is an incisional hernia?

Any operation on your abdomen needs a cut that is closed with stitches. Sometimes your wound does not heal properly and a weakness happens in the muscle layer. This results in the contents of your abdomen, along with the inner layer, pushing through your abdominal muscles. This produces a lump under your skin called a hernia.

What are the benefits of surgery?

You should no longer have the hernia. Surgery should prevent serious complications and allow you to return to normal activities.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

You can sometimes control the hernia with supportive clothing or simply leave it alone. It will not get better without surgery.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic.

The operation can take several hours. Your surgeon will make several small cuts on your abdomen so they can insert tubes (ports) into your abdomen. Your abdominal cavity will be inflated with gas (carbon dioxide). Your surgeon will insert surgical instruments through the ports along with a telescope so they can see inside your abdomen and perform the operation.

Your surgeon will free up the structures from your abdomen that are stuck in the hernia, and insert a synthetic mesh to cover the weak spot.

What can I do to help make the operation a success?

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.

Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Do not do exercises that involve heavy lifting or make your hernia painful.

Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Speak to the healthcare team about any vaccinations you might need to reduce your risk of serious illness while you recover. When you come into hospital, practise hand washing and wear a face covering when asked.

What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and can even cause death.

General complications of any operation

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Blood clot in your leg
- Blood clot in your lung
- Chest infection

Specific complications of this operation

Keyhole surgery complications

- Damage to structures such as your bowel, bladder or blood vessels
- Developing a hernia
- Injury to your bowel
- Surgical emphysema
- Gas embolism

Hernia repair complications

- Developing a collection of blood (haematoma) or fluid (seroma) under your wound
- Difficulty passing urine
- Injury to structures that come from your abdomen and are within the hernia

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Unsightly scarring of your skin

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home on the same day or after 1 to 2 days.

Increase how much you walk around over the first few days. You may need to take painkillers to help you.

Your doctor will tell you when you can return to work. Do not lift anything heavy for at least 6 weeks.

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.

Summary

An incisional hernia is a weakness in your abdominal wall, which happens when previous wounds do not heal properly. If left untreated, an incisional hernia can cause serious complications.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Acknowledgements

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Illustrator

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