

# Inguinal Hernia Repair (child)

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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 inguinal hernia?

An inguinal hernia is where the contents of the abdomen push down towards the scrotum in boys, or labia (folds of skin at the entrance of the vagina) in girls.

## What are the benefits?

Your child should no longer have the hernia. Surgery should prevent your child from having any of the serious complications that a hernia can cause and allow them to return to normal activities.

## Are there any alternatives?

The hernia will not get better without surgery.

## What will happen if I decide that my child will not have the procedure or the procedure is delayed?

Occasionally, the hernia can get larger with time. It can also be dangerous because the intestines or other structures within the abdomen can get trapped and have their blood supply cut off (strangulated hernia) (risk: 3 in 10 for premature babies and children under 1 year, 1 in 10 for older children).

The symptoms that may suggest a strangulated hernia are:

- Severe pain.
- A hernia that will not disappear when your child lies down.
- Vomiting.

If your child has any of these symptoms you must call the healthcare team immediately as your child may need an urgent procedure.

If left untreated, a strangulated hernia will cause damage to the testicle (in boys), or ovary (in girls), or bowel and may cause death. If you think your child has a strangulated hernia, take them to hospital straight away.

Do not give them anything to eat or drink.

## What does the procedure involve?

Inguinal hernias can be repaired using keyhole surgery but most inguinal hernias in children are repaired through a cut on the groin.

The procedure is performed under a general anaesthetic (where your child is sent to sleep). The procedure usually takes about an hour.

Your surgeon will make a cut on the groin and find the 'hernial sac'.

In boys, the sac is stuck on to the blood vessels that supply the testicle. It is also stuck on to the vas, the tube that will carry sperm away from the testicle. In girls, the hernia can contain an ovary or part of the fallopian tube.

Your surgeon will put back the contents of the sac into the abdominal cavity and peel the sac away before tying it off.

## What complications can happen?

Possible complications of this procedure are shown below. Some may be serious and can even be life threatening.

### General complications of any procedure

- Bleeding
- Inflammation
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication

### Specific complications of this procedure

- Developing a collection of blood or fluid under the wound
- Developing a hydrocele, which is a swelling around the testicle
- Injury to structures within the hernia that come from the abdomen
- Damage to nerves that supply the skin around the groin
- Damage of the blood supply to the testicle
- The testicle may come to lie higher in the scrotum
- Damage to the vas



An inguinal hernia in a boy

## Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Scarring of the skin

## What happens after the procedure?

They should be able to go home the same day or the day after.

Your doctor will tell you when your child can return to school. This is usually after 5 to 7 days.

Most children make a full recovery and can return to normal activities.

## Summary

An inguinal hernia is a common condition. It is caused by the contents of the abdomen pushing down towards the scrotum or labia. If left untreated, an inguinal 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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