

Adult Umbilical Hernia Repair



AMERICAN COLLEGE OF SURGEONS

Inspiring Quality:

Highest Standards, Better Outcomes

Patient Education

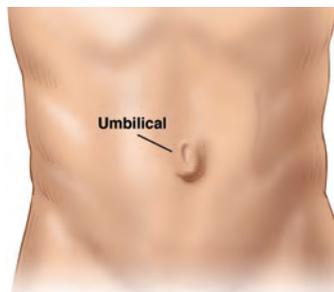
This educational information is to help you be better informed about your operation and empower you with the skills and knowledge needed to actively participate in your care.

Keeping You Informed

Information that will help you further understand your operation and your role in healing.

Education is provided on:

Hernia Repair Overview.....	1
Condition, Symptoms, Tests.....	2
Treatment Options.....	3
Risks and Possible Complications.....	4
Preparation and Expectations.....	5
Your Recovery and Discharge.....	6
Pain Control.....	7
Glossary/References.....	8



Umbilical Hernia Location

The Condition

An umbilical hernia occurs when a tissue bulges out through an opening in the muscles on the abdomen near the navel or belly button (umbilicus). About 10% of abdominal hernias are umbilical hernias.¹

Common Symptoms

- Visible bulge on the abdomen, especially when coughing or straining
- Pain or pressure at the hernia site

Treatment Options

Surgical Procedure

Open hernia repair—An incision is made near the site. Your surgeon will repair the hernia with mesh or by suturing (sewing) the muscle layer closed.

Laparoscopic hernia repair—The hernia is repaired with mesh or sutures inserted through instruments placed into small incisions in the abdomen.

Nonsurgical Procedure

Watchful waiting is generally not recommended for adults with an umbilical hernia. You may be able to wait to repair umbilical hernias that are very small, reducible (can be pushed back in) and not uncomfortable.² There is a risk of the intestines being squeezed in the hernia pouch and blood supply being cut off (strangulation). If this happens, you will need an immediate operation.³

Benefits and Risks of Your Operation

Benefits—An operation is the only way to repair a hernia. You can return to your normal activities and in most cases will not have further discomfort.

Risks of not having an operation—Your hernia may cause pain and increase in size. If your intestine becomes squeezed in the hernia pouch, you will have sudden pain, vomiting, and require an immediate operation.

Possible risks include return of the hernia; infection; injury to the bladder, blood vessels, intestines, or nerves; and continued pain at the hernia site.

Expectations

Before your operation—Evaluation may include blood tests, urinalysis, and ultrasound. Your surgeon and anesthesia provider will discuss your health history, home medications, and pain control options.

The day of your operation—You will not eat or drink for six hours before the operation. Most often, you will take your normal medication with a sip of water. You will need someone to drive you home.

Your recovery—For a simple repair, you may go home the same day. You will need to stay longer for complex repairs.⁴

Call your surgeon if you have severe pain, stomach cramping, chills or a high fever (over 101°F or 38.3°C), odor or increased drainage from your incision, or no bowel movements for three days.

SURGICAL PATIENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

Prepare for the Best Recovery

This first page is an overview. For more detailed information, review the entire document.

Keeping You Informed

Who Gets an Umbilical Hernia?

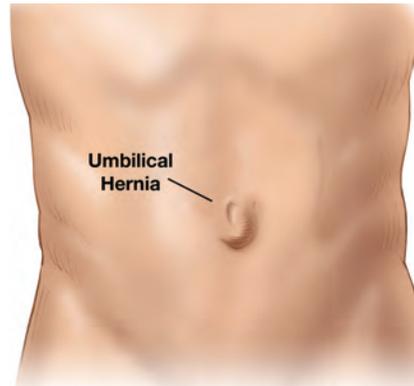
Ten percent of all hernias in adults are umbilical.² Umbilical hernias can suddenly bulge out. They occur more often in adults over 60 years when the muscles start to weaken.⁵

Some risk factors are:

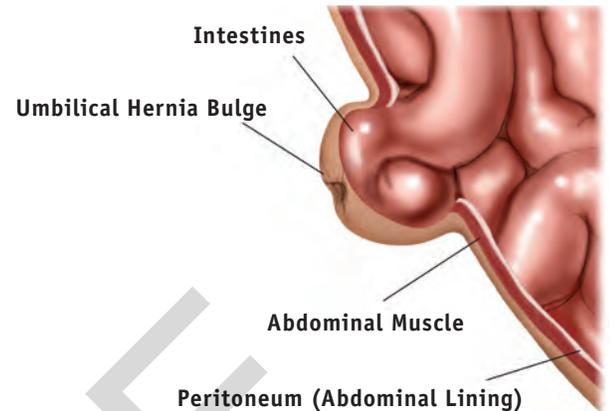
- Older age—muscles become weaker
- Overweight and obesity—increased weight places pressure on abdominal muscle
- Chronic straining
- Family history
- Ascites: excess fluid in the space between the tissues lining the abdomen and abdominal organs; may be due to alcoholism
- Pregnancy, particularly multiple pregnancies

Pregnancy Considerations

The repair of umbilical hernias during pregnancy is considered only if the hernia becomes incarcerated or strangulated.²



Hernia Location



Internal View

The Condition

An **umbilical hernia** occurs when part of the intestine or fatty tissue bulges through the muscle near the belly button (navel, umbilicus). Most (9 of 10) umbilical hernias in adults are acquired. This means that increased pressure near the umbilicus causes the umbilical hernia to bulge out.

A **reducible hernia** can be pushed back into the opening or decrease in size when lying flat. When intestine or abdominal tissue fills the hernia sac and cannot be pushed back, it is **irreducible or incarcerated**. A hernia is **strangulated** if the intestine is trapped in the hernia pouch and the blood supply to the intestine is cut off. **This is a surgical emergency.**

Herniorrhaphy is the surgical repair of a hernia.

Hernioplasty is surgical repair of a hernia with mesh inserted to reinforce the weak area.

Symptoms

The most common symptoms are:

- Bulge in the abdominal area that often increases with coughing or straining
- Pain or pressure at the hernia site
- Increasing sharp abdominal pain and vomiting can mean that the hernia is **strangulated. This is a surgical emergency and immediate treatment is needed.**

Common Diagnostic Tests⁴

History and Physical Exam

Checks for the presence of bulge

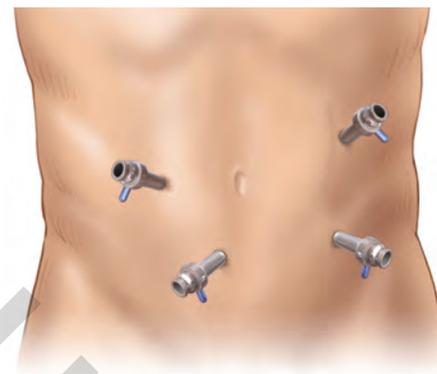
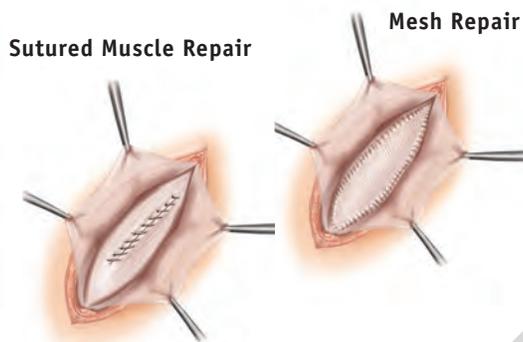
Additional Tests (see Glossary)

Other tests may include:

- Ultrasound
- Computerized tomography (CT) scan
- Blood tests
- Urinalysis
- Electrocardiogram (ECG) – for patients over 45 or if high risk of heart problems



Open Repair



Laparoscopic Repair

Surgical Treatment

The type of operation depends on hernia size and location, and if it is a repeat hernia (recurrence). Your health, age, and the surgeon's expertise are also important. An operation is the only treatment for a hernia repair.

Your hernia can be repaired either as an **open or laparoscopic approach**. The repair can be done by using sutures only or adding a piece of mesh.

Open Hernia Repair

The surgeon makes an incision near the hernia site, and the bulging tissue is gently pushed back into the abdomen. Sutures or mesh are used to close the muscle.

- For a suture-only repair: The hernia sac is removed. Then the tissue along the muscle edge is sewn together. The umbilicus is then fixed back to the muscle. This procedure is often used for small defects.⁶
- For an open mesh repair: The hernia sac is removed. Mesh is placed beneath the hernia site. The mesh is attached using sutures sewn into the stronger tissue surrounding the hernia. The mesh extends 3 to 4 cm beyond the edges of the hernia. The umbilicus is fixed back to the muscle. Mesh is often used for large hernia repairs and reduces the risk that the hernia will come back again.
- For all open repairs, the skin site is closed using sutures, staples, or surgical glue.
- An open repair may be done with local anesthesia and sedation given through an IV.

- Your surgeon may inject a local anesthetic around the hernia repair site to help control pain.
- With complex or large hernias, small drains may be placed going from inside to the outside of the abdomen.

Laparoscopic Hernia Repair

The surgeon will make several small punctures or incisions in the abdomen. Ports or trocars (hollow tubes) are inserted into the openings. Surgical tools and a lighted camera are placed into the ports. The abdomen is inflated with carbon dioxide gas to make it easier for the surgeon to see the hernia. Mesh may be sutured or fixed with staples to the muscle around the hernia site. The port openings are closed with sutures, surgical clips, or glue.

Nonsurgical Treatment

Watchful waiting is not usually recommended except for very small umbilical hernias.⁷ A surgical repair is recommended for adults who have symptoms, incarceration, thinning of the skin, or uncontrollable ascites.

Because abdominal muscles weaken with age, the hernia can increase in size, and there is a risk of incarceration and strangulation.² Abdominal binders that apply pressure and push back the bulge will not repair the hernia.

Keeping You Informed

Open versus Laparoscopic Repair

There is no significant evidence on the best technique to repair an umbilical hernia, and more study is needed. The type of repair may also depend on the size of the hernia.

- When comparing open mesh repair with laparoscopic mesh repair, there is no difference in the length of hospital stay or recurrence rate. There is a slightly lower wound complication rate, including seromas, hematomas, and infection, with laparoscopic repair.^{6,8} Both types of operations have similar long-term results.
- Open repairs can be done with local anesthesia instead of general anesthesia and are frequently done as outpatient procedures.
- Strangulated hernias may have to be repaired as an open approach.
- The use of mesh provides a stronger repair and decreases the rate of recurrence.⁹
- Suture repair will result in a small incision around the hernia site. Laparoscopic repairs usually have 3 to 4 smaller scars at the site of the entry ports.

Risks of this Procedure

RISKS	WHAT CAN HAPPEN	KEEPING YOU INFORMED
Immediate postoperative pain	There is no difference in pain scores when comparing suture vs. mesh vs. laparoscopic repair of umbilical hernias by postoperative day 3. ⁶ The laparoscopic approach avoids a long incision and dissection.	There may be a feeling of tightness in the abdomen because the muscle has been pulled together. ⁶ Your pain will be managed with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications and by resting and avoiding straining or lifting.
Long-term pain	Long-term pain has not been reported by patients at follow-up visits extending between 1 and 24 months after the repair. ⁶	Relaxation and deep breathing exercises may be performed to reduce postoperative pain. A pillow can be used as a splint and held against the abdomen for support when walking, laughing, or coughing.
Recurrence (hernia comes back)	The use of mesh appears to reduce the rate of umbilical hernia recurrence in most patients. ^{6,8,9} Obesity, diabetes, and smoking can affect wound healing and increase recurrence rates. ¹¹	Mesh is commonly used with large hernias to decrease the recurrence rate. ¹⁰ Laparoscopic repair is recommended for large or recurrent hernias because the surgeon avoids making an incision and avoids previous scar tissue. ⁶
Seroma	A seroma (collection of clear/yellow fluid) occurs in 50 of 1,000 patients having suture repair and 60 of 1,000 of patients having mesh (laparoscopic and open) repairs. ⁹	Seromas can form around the former hernia site. Most disappear on their own. Removal of fluid with a sterile needle may be required. ²
Infection	Wound infection is similar regardless of the type of repair done. ⁹	An antibiotic may be given just before the operation. Smoking and having other diseases can increase infection rates. ²
Hematoma	Hematomas (collections of blood) are rare. There is no difference in the occurrence rate between suture and mesh repair. ⁹	Hematomas are treated with anti-inflammatory medications and rest. Most will resolve on their own with time.
Hernia at the port site	Hernia at the site where the laparoscopic instruments were inserted occurs in less than 4 of 1,000 adults. ¹²	This risk is reduced with the use of smaller ports and instruments. ¹³
Heart/ breathing	There are no reports of heart or breathing complications related specifically to an umbilical hernia operation.	Other health problems can increase the risk for heart and breathing anesthesia-related complications. Your anesthesia provider will suggest the best option for you.
Elderly risks	The length of hospital stay may increase in elderly patients. Complications related to general anesthesia may be higher because of other diseases/health problems.	If general anesthesia is a concern, an open surgery with local anesthesia may be recommended.
Death	No surgical deaths are reported directly related to umbilical hernia repair except for strangulated hernias.	Stopping smoking and being at the ideal body weight before surgery reduces the risks of complications. Your surgical team is prepared for all emergency situations.

The data have been averaged per 1,000 cases

Expectations: Preparation for Your Operation

What You Can Expect

Home Medication

Bring a list of all of the medications, vitamins, and any over-the-counter medicines that you are taking. Your medications may have to be adjusted before your operation. Some medications can affect your recovery and response to anesthesia. Most often, you will take your morning medication with a sip of water.

Anesthesia

Let your anesthesia provider know if you have allergies, neurologic disease (epilepsy, stroke), heart disease, stomach problems, lung disease (asthma, emphysema), endocrine disease (diabetes, thyroid conditions), or loose teeth; use alcohol or drugs; take any herbs or vitamins; or if you have a history of nausea and vomiting with anesthesia.

If you smoke, you should let your surgical team know, and you should plan to quit. Quitting before your surgery can decrease your rate of respiratory and wound complications. Quitting also increases your chances of staying smoke free for life. Resources to help you quit may be found at www.facs.org/patienteducation or www.lungusa.org/stop-smoking.

Length of Stay

If you have local anesthesia, you will usually go home the same day. You may stay overnight if you have a repair of a large or incarcerated hernia. A laparoscopic repair may result in a longer anesthesia time. Complications such as severe nausea and vomiting or an inability to pass urine may also result in a longer stay.

Safety Checks

An identification (ID) bracelet and allergy bracelet with your name and hospital/clinic number will be placed on your wrist. These should be checked by all health team members before they perform any procedures or give you medication. Your surgeon will mark and initial the operation site.

Fluids and Anesthesia

An intravenous line (IV) will be started to give you fluids and medication.

For general anesthesia, you will be asleep and pain free during the operation. A tube may be placed down your throat to help you breathe during the operation. For spinal anesthesia, a small needle with medication will be placed in your back alongside your spinal column. You will be awake during the operation but pain free.

The Day of Your Operation

- You should not eat or drink for at least 6 hours before the operation.
- You should bathe or shower and clean your abdomen, especially around the umbilical area, with a mild antibacterial soap.
- You should brush your teeth and rinse your mouth with mouthwash.
- Do not shave the surgical site; the surgical team will clip the hair near the incision site.

What to Bring

- Insurance card and identification
- Advance Directives (see glossary)
- List of medicines
- Loose-fitting, comfortable clothes
- Slip-on shoes that don't require that you bend over
- Leave jewelry and valuables at home

After Your Operation

You will be moved to a recovery room where your heart rate, breathing rate, oxygen saturation, blood pressure, and urine output will be closely watched. Be sure that all visitors wash their hands.

Preventing Pneumonia and Blood Clots

Movement and deep breathing after your operation can help prevent postoperative complications such as blood clots, fluid in your lungs, and pneumonia. Every hour, take 5 to 10 deep breaths and hold each breath for 3 to 5 seconds.

When you have an operation, you are at risk of getting blood clots because of not moving during anesthesia. The longer and more complicated your surgery, the greater the risk. This risk is decreased by getting up and walking 5 to 6 times per day, wearing special support stockings or compression boots on your legs, and for high-risk patients, taking a medication that thins your blood.

Questions to Ask

About my Operation:

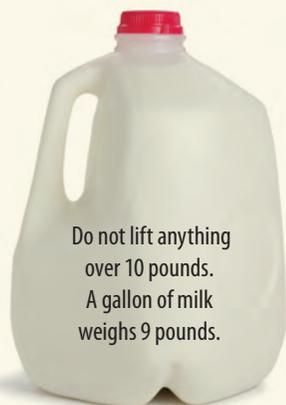
- What are the side effects and risks of anesthesia?
- What technique will be used to repair the hernia? (Laparoscopic or open? Mesh or with sutures?)
- What are the risks of this procedure for me?
- Will you be performing the entire operation yourself?
- What level of pain should I expect, and how will it be managed?
- How long will it be before I can return to my normal activities (work, driving, lifting)?

Your Recovery and Discharge

Keeping You Informed

High-Fiber Foods

Foods high in fiber include beans, bran cereals and whole-grain breads, peas, dried fruit (figs, apricots, and dates), raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, sweet corn, broccoli, baked potatoes with skin, plums, pears, apples, greens, and nuts.



Do not lift anything over 10 pounds. A gallon of milk weighs 9 pounds.

Your Recovery and Discharge

Thinking Clearly

If general anesthesia is given or if you are taking narcotics for pain, it may cause you to feel different for 2 or 3 days. You may have trouble remembering and feel tired. You should not drive, drink alcohol, or make any big decisions for at least 2 days.

Nutrition

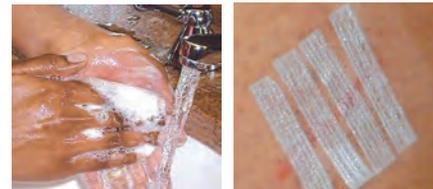
- When you wake up from the anesthesia, you will be able to drink small amounts of liquid. If you do not feel sick, you can begin eating regular foods.
- Continue to drink about 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.
- Eat a high-fiber diet so you don't strain while having a bowel movement.

Activity

- Slowly increase your activity. Be sure to get up and walk every hour or so to prevent blood clot formation.
- You may go home the same day for a simple repair. If you have other health conditions or complications, such as nausea, vomiting, bleeding, or infection after surgery, you may stay longer.
- Do not lift items heavier than 10 pounds or participate in strenuous activity for at least 4 weeks or longer if advised by your surgeon.

Work and Return to School

- After recovery, you can usually return to work within 2 to 3 days.
- You will not be able to lift anything over 10 pounds, climb, or do strenuous activity for 4 to 6 weeks following surgical repair of an umbilical hernia.
- Lifting limitation may last for 6 months for complex or recurrent repairs.²



Handwashing

Steri-strips

Wound Care

- Always wash your hands before and after touching near your incision site.
- Do not soak in a bathtub until your stitches, Steri-strips, or staples are removed. You may take a shower after the second postoperative day unless you are told not to.
- Follow your surgeon's instructions on when to change your bandages.
- A small amount of drainage from the incision is normal. If the dressing is soaked with blood, call your surgeon.
- If you have Steri-strips in place, they will fall off in 7 to 10 days.
- If you have a glue-like covering over the incision, allow the glue to flake off on its own.
- Avoid wearing tight or rough clothing. It may rub against your incisions and make it harder for them to heal.
- Protect the new skin, especially from the sun. The sun can burn and cause darker scarring.
- Your scar will heal in about 4 to 6 weeks and will become softer and continue to fade over the next year.

Bowel Movements

Avoid straining with bowel movements by increasing the fiber in your diet with high-fiber foods or over-the-counter medicines (like Metamucil and Fibercon). Be sure you are drinking 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.

Pain

The amount of pain is different for each person. The new medicine you will need after your operation is for pain control, and your doctor will advise how much you should take. You can use throat lozenges if you have sore throat pain from the tube placed in your throat during your anesthesia.

When to Contact Your Surgeon

Contact your surgeon if you have:

- Pain that will not go away
- Pain that gets worse
- A fever of more than 101°F (38.3°C)
- Repeated vomiting
- Swelling, redness, bleeding, or foul-smelling drainage from your wound site
- Strong or continuous abdominal pain or swelling of your abdomen
- No bowel movement by 3 days after the operation

Pain Control

Everyone reacts to pain in a different way. A scale from 0 to 10 is used to measure pain. At a “0,” you do not feel any pain. A “10” is the worst pain you have ever felt. Following a laparoscopic procedure, pain is sometimes felt in the shoulder. This is due to the gas inserted into your abdomen during the procedure. Moving and walking help to decrease the gas and the shoulder pain.

Extreme pain puts extra stress on your body at a time when your body needs to focus on healing. Do not wait until your pain has reached a “10” or is unbearable before telling your provider. It is much easier to control pain before it becomes severe.

Common Medicines to Control Pain

Narcotics or opioids are used for severe pain. Possible side effects of narcotics are sleepiness; lowered blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing rate; skin rash and itching; constipation; nausea; and difficulty urinating. Some examples of narcotics include morphine, oxycodone (Percocet/Percodan), and hydromorphone (Dilaudid). Medications can be given to control many of the side effects of narcotics.

Non-Narcotic Pain Medication

Most non-opioid analgesics are classified as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). They are used to treat mild pain and inflammation or combined with narcotics to treat severe pain. Possible side effects of NSAIDs are stomach upset, bleeding in the digestive tract, and fluid retention. These side effects usually are not seen with short-term use. Let your doctor know if you have heart, kidney, or liver problems. Examples of NSAIDs include ibuprofen, Motrin, Aleve, and Toradol (given as a shot).

Pain Control without Medicine

Distraction helps you focus on other activities instead of your pain. Listening to music, playing games, or other engaging activities can help you cope with mild pain and anxiety.

Splinting your stomach by placing a pillow over your abdomen with firm pressure before coughing or movement can help reduce the pain.

Guided imagery helps you direct and control your emotions. Close your eyes and gently inhale and exhale. Picture yourself in the center of somewhere beautiful. Feel the beauty surrounding you and your emotions coming back to your control. You should feel calmer.

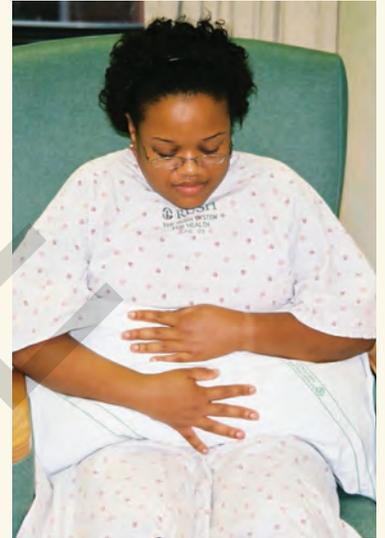
OTHER INSTRUCTIONS:

FOLLOW-UP APPOINTMENTS

WHO:

DATE:

PHONE:



Splinting Your Stomach



Guided imagery

More Information

For more information, please go to the American College of Surgeons Patient Education website at <http://www.facs.org/patienteducation>. For a complete review of hernia repair, consult *Selected Readings in General Surgery, "Hernia" 2012 Vol. 37 No. 8* at www.facs.org/SRGS.

GLOSSARY

Abdominal X ray: Checks for any loops of bowel or air-filled sacs.

Abdominal ultrasound: Sound waves are used to determine the location of deep structures in the body. A hand roller is placed on top of clear gel and rolled across the abdomen.

Ascites: Excess fluid in the space between the tissues lining the abdomen and abdominal organs; may be due to alcoholism or liver disease.

Advance Directives: Documents signed by a competent person giving direction to health care providers about treatment choices.

Blood tests: Tests usually include a Chem-6 profile (sodium, potassium, chloride, carbon dioxide, blood urea nitrogen and creatinine) and complete blood count (red blood cell and white blood cell count).

Computerized tomography (CT) scan: A diagnostic test using X ray and a computer to create a detailed, three-dimensional picture of your abdomen. A CT scan normally takes about 15 minutes or less.

Electrocardiogram (ECG): Measures the rate and regularity of heartbeats, the size of the heart chambers and any damage to the heart.

General anesthesia: A treatment with certain medicines that puts you into a deep sleep so you do not feel pain during surgery.

Hematoma: A collection of blood that has leaked into the tissues of the skin or in an organ, resulting from cutting in surgery or the blood's inability to form a clot.

Incarceration: The protrusion or constriction of an organ through the wall of the cavity that normally contains it.

Local anesthesia: The loss of sensation only in the area of the body where an anesthetic drug is applied or injected.

Seroma: A collection of serous (clear/yellow) fluid.

Strangulation: Part of the intestine or fat is squeezed in the hernia sac, and blood supply to the tissue is cut off.

Urinalysis: A visual and chemical examination of the urine, most often used to screen for urinary tract infections and kidney disease.

REFERENCES

The information provided in this report is chosen from recent articles based on relevant clinical research or trends. The research below does not represent all that is available for your surgery. Ask your doctor if he or she recommends that you read any additional research.

1. Klinge U, Prescher A, Klosterhalfen B et al. Entstehung und Pathophysiologie der Bauchwanddefekte. *Der Chirurg*. 1997;68:293.
2. Muschaweck U in Umbilical and epigastric hernia repair, *Surgical Clinics of North America*. 2003;1207-1221.
3. Malangoni MA, Rosen MD. Hernias. In: CM Townsend, RD Beauchamp, et al. *Textbook of Surgery*. Philadelphia, PA. Saunders, 2008.
4. Weinstein PR, Hoff JT. Hernias and Other Abdominal Lesions of the Abdominal Wall. *Current Surgical Diagnosis and Treatment*. Eds. L.W. Way and Gerald M. Doherty. 11th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004. 783-796.
5. "Strangulated Hernia" retrieved from <http://medicaldb.blogspot.com/2011/01/strangulated-hernia.html>.
6. Lau H, Patil NG. Umbilical Hernia in Adults, *Surgical Endoscopy*. 2003;17:2016-2220.
7. Greenfield's surgery: Scientific principles and practice. Eds, Mulhollan M et al. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2011. Pp. 1131.
8. Solomon TA, Wignesvaran P, Chaudry MA, Tutton MG. *Surgical Endoscopy*. 2010;24:3109-3112.
9. Arroyo A, García P, Pérez F, Andreu J, Candela F, Calpeña R. Randomized clinical trial comparing suture and mesh repair of umbilical hernia in adults. *British Journal of Surgery*. 2001;88:1321-1323.
10. Hidalgo M, Higuero F, Alvarez-Caperochi J, Machuca J, Laporte E, Figueroa J et al. Hernias de la pared abdominal. Estudio multicentrico epidemiologico (1993-1994). *Cirugia Española*. 1996; 59:309-405.
11. Martin DF, Williams RF, Mulrooney T, Voeller GR. Ventrelex mesh in umbilical/epigastric hernia repairs; clinical outcomes and complications. *Hernia*. 2008;379-383.
12. Wright BE, Becerman J, Cohen M, Cumming JK, Rodriguez JL. Is laparoscopic umbilical hernia repair with mesh a reasonable alternative to conventional repair? *The American Journal of Surgery*. 2002;184:505-509.
13. Helgstrand F, Rosenberg J, Bisgaard T. Trocar site hernia after laparoscopic surgery: A qualitative systematic review. *Hernia*. 2011; 15:113-121.

Reviewed by:

Nancy Strand, MPH, RN
Mark Malangoni, MD, FACS
Brian Heniford, MD, FACS

Reviewed April 2013

DISCLAIMER

This information is published to educate you about your specific surgical procedures. It is not intended to take the place of a discussion with a qualified surgeon who is familiar with your situation. It is important to remember that each individual is different, and the reasons and outcomes of any operation depend upon the patient's individual condition.

The American College of Surgeons (ACS) is a scientific and educational organization that is dedicated to the ethical and competent practice of surgery; it was founded to raise the standards of surgical practice and to improve the quality of care for the surgical patient. The ACS has endeavored to present information for prospective surgical patients based on current scientific information; there is no warranty on the timeliness, accuracy, or usefulness of this content.

We are grateful to Ethicon Endo-Surgery for the educational grant to the American College of Surgeons Foundation in support of the Division of Surgical Patient Education Program Hernia Brochures.