

## Hernia Surgery

This information is for patients having hernia surgery and aims to summarise what hernias are, how they are treated and what the recovery period looks like following surgical treatments.

### What is a hernia?

A hernia is a bulging or protrusion of an organ or tissue through an abnormal opening. The more common abdominal hernias are groin hernias (which can be over the inguinal or femoral region) or abdominal wall hernias (ventral, umbilical/belly button, supraumbilical/above the belly button). Hernias can also develop after surgery if a weak point develops over the incision site.

### Why do hernias develop?

Multiple factors contribute to the development of hernia. There are genetic, environment and patient specific factors that all contribute to hernias developing. Straining, chronic cough, smoking, constipation, heavy lifting, and many other activities may predispose to hernias forming. Once a hernia develops, most of the time surgery is required.

### How are hernias treated?

Hernias are typically treated with surgery. There are 3 types of hernia repair which include open repair, laparoscopic repair, and robotic repair.

- **Laparoscopic Hernia Repair** – A laparoscope, a thin instrument with a camera attached, is inserted through a small incision at the umbilicus. The abdomen is inflated, and the inner lining is cut. This allows mesh to be placed inside to cover the defects in the abdominal wall and strengthen the tissue.
- **Open Hernia Repair** – An incision is made in the groin, through which the surgeon pushes the hernia back into the abdomen and reinforces the abdominal wall with stitches or synthetic mesh.
- **Robotic Hernia Repair** – Robotic hernia repair is essentially the same procedure as a laparoscopic hernia repair with the difference being that it is performed by a surgical robot controlled by the surgeon.

## What does the recovery period look like?

- Most people take several days to a week off work to recover. You will most likely tire easily. There will be groin tenderness for about 1 week. This is normal. Plan to take rest periods throughout each day as you feel you need them. If required, ask the clinic for a Medical Certificate.
- Generally, patients find they are back to their usual daily routine within a week after laparoscopic hernia repair and that they are fully recovered within a month. Patients who have an open hernia repair usually take several weeks for the groin to become more comfortable.
- Occasionally patients have trouble with constipation after their hernia repair. The constipation may be relieved by increasing fibre and fluid intake and /or by taking an over-the-counter stool softeners and laxatives like Movicol and Metamucil. Your bowel function should return to your previous pattern within a week to 10 days.

### **Nutrition:**

- Increase your fluid intake, especially water. 8 glasses a day is the amount you should consume regularly.
- You may eat a normal diet, but consuming high-fibre foods can help to avoid straining while having a bowel movement. You may also want to add fibre supplements to your diet, but you should discuss this with Dr Urquhart before doing so.

### **Activity:**

- Gradually increase your activity. Take rest periods as needed. Walking gently is encouraged.
- Commence lifting light amounts only, starting with 1kg for the first week, 2kg for the second week, 3kg for the third week and so on.
- At 8 weeks gradually increase your regular activities.
- As a rule of thumb, if it hurts, do not do it!
- Get adequate amounts of sleep each night.
- You may resume lighter aerobic exercise 3 weeks after surgery (eg gentle 20-30min walks)
- You should not drive or operate machinery while you are on prescription pain medicine.

**Wound Care:**

- **Dressing** - The dressing is usually a water impermeable product called Comfeel. Although tissue fluid can accumulate beneath the dressing this does not cause any harm. Generally, just leave the dressing intact and shower as normal. The dressing will be removed at the first post-operative visit to the rooms.
- **Incision** - Ice packs to the surgical site for 24 hours over insulation may bring comfort. Brace your incisions with a small pillow when coughing and/ or sneezing. Cover your incisions further to reduce any irritation that may occur from contact with clothing. If applicable, you may wish to wear "brief" type underwear day and night for a few days to minimize scrotal swelling and tenderness.

**Notify the rooms if you are experiencing any of the following:**

- Temperature over 38 degrees
- Drainage or fluid from incision that may be foul smelling
- Increased tenderness or soreness at the wound or the wound edges are no longer together
- Redness or swelling at the incision site
- Persistent nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea or constipation
- Swelling, redness and/or persistent pain in legs
- Difficulty urinating

If you have any queries, please contact the clinic on 1300 008 883.