

## Umbilical Hernia Repair (child)

This document will give you information about an umbilical hernia repair. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

### What is an umbilical hernia?

There is a natural weakness in the abdominal wall behind the umbilicus, caused by the way babies develop in the womb. If the contents of the abdomen push through, this produces a lump called a hernia (see figure 1).

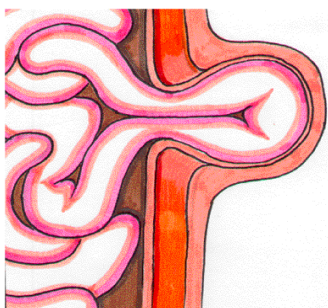


Figure 1

Hernia – bowel pushing through a weakness in the muscle wall of the abdomen

If your child has a hernia, you may notice a swelling, particularly when they cry or strain.

Umbilical hernias can be dangerous because the intestines or other structures within the abdomen can get trapped and have their blood supply cut off (strangulated hernia). Although umbilical hernias hardly ever cause these complications in childhood, they are more likely to do so in adulthood.

### What are the benefits of surgery?

Your child should no longer have the hernia. Surgery should prevent your child from having any serious complications in adult life.

### Are there any alternatives to surgery?

It is safe to see if the hernia will close without an operation.

If your child is over 4 and they still have an umbilical hernia, the hernia is unlikely to close on its own.

### What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic. Your surgeon will make a small cut around half the umbilicus and close the opening in the tough layer of the abdominal wall with strong stitches.

### What complications can happen?

#### 1 General complications of any operation

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection in the surgical wound
- Unsightly scarring

#### 2 Specific complications of this operation

- Developing a lump under the wound
- Injury to structures within the hernia
- Unsightly appearance

### How soon will my child recover?

Your child should be able to go home the same day.

Your child should be able to go to school after one week but should avoid strenuous activity for six weeks.

Occasionally the hernia comes back.

## Summary

An umbilical hernia is a common condition. If your child is over 4, surgery is usually recommended to prevent serious complications that can happen in adult life.

## Further information

You can get further information from:

- [www.aboutmyhealth.org](http://www.aboutmyhealth.org) - for support and information you can trust
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 (0845 606 46 47 - textphone)
- [www.eidohealthcare.com](http://www.eidohealthcare.com)

## Acknowledgements

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



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