

PS05lite Umbilical Hernia Repair (child)

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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?

An umbilical hernia is caused by a weakness in the layer of muscle of the abdominal wall, just behind the umbilicus (belly button) (see figure 1). All babies have umbilical hernias when they develop in the womb. The hernia will usually close before birth but about 1 in 5 babies born at term (after 37 weeks) still has an umbilical hernia.



Figure 1
An umbilical hernia

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 of the serious complications that a hernia can cause 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 three years old 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 and usually takes about an hour. Your surgeon will make a small cut around half of the umbilicus and close the opening in the tough layer of the abdominal wall with strong stitches.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring

2 Specific complications

- 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 return to school after a week but for six weeks should not do any strenuous exercise.

Most children make a full recovery. However, the hernia can come back.

Summary

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

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Author: Mr Shailinder Singh DM FRCS (Paed. Surg.)
and Mr Jonathan Sutcliffe FRCS
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