



## **Education**

### **Groin (Inguinal) Hernia**

#### **What is a groin (inguinal) hernia?**

A hernia is a condition in which part of the intestine (bowel) bulges through a weak area in the abdominal muscles. A groin, or inguinal, hernia occurs in the groin. The groin is the lower abdominal area where the legs join the body. A groin hernia happens when the bowel pushes through a weak spot in the inguinal canal. The inguinal canal is an opening between layers of muscle in the groin.

#### **How does it occur?**

Some people, especially men, are born with a weakness in their groin muscles. With or without this weakness, a hernia may be caused by anything that causes the intestine to push against the inguinal canal. Activities or conditions that might cause this pressure are:

- lifting heavy objects
- coughing or sneezing a lot
- being constipated or pushing too hard when having a bowel movement
- being overweight
- being pregnant
- in men, pushing too hard to urinate when the prostate is enlarged.

#### **What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms of a groin hernia may include:

- a lump in the groin that can be pushed back in
- pain or discomfort in the lower belly or groin, especially with activity
- a lump that cannot be pushed back in, which can be a life-threatening problem because the bowel may become blocked.

#### **How is it diagnosed?**

Your health care provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. You may have x-rays or blood tests to check for blockage in the intestine.

#### **How is it treated?**

The main treatment for a groin hernia is surgery to repair the opening in the muscle wall. Sometimes the weak area is reinforced with mesh during the surgery. Your health care provider will usually suggest that you have the operation as soon as possible to avoid complications.

If your hernia is causing few or no symptoms, you may choose not to have surgery. You may need to use a groin support. You need to discuss with your provider what symptoms you should watch for and when you should seek medical care for possible hernia problems.

#### **How long will the effects last?**

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The hernia will not get better on its own, but it may not get worse for months or even years. A complication of a groin hernia is that after the bowel has pushed through the muscle wall, its contents may become trapped. A dangerous complication of this trapping is that the blood supply to the bowel may be cut off and the tissue may die, resulting in gangrene. This is a medical emergency requiring surgery.

### **How can I take care of myself?**

- Follow your health care provider's instructions.
- Be careful when you lift, pull, or push heavy objects. Learn to lift, push, or pull heavy objects the correct way. Adjust your duties at work or your recreational activities if necessary.
- Ask your provider if you need to wear a groin support.
- Follow your provider's advice for losing weight if you are overweight.
- Avoid constipation by eating foods that are high in fiber, using stool softeners, or drinking a natural stimulant beverage such as prune juice. Use laxatives or enemas only if recommended by your provider.
- Avoid smoking to help prevent coughing.
- Take medicine to reduce allergy symptoms, including sneezing and coughing.
- If your symptoms continue or if you develop new symptoms, tell your provider right away.

### **How can I help prevent a groin hernia?**

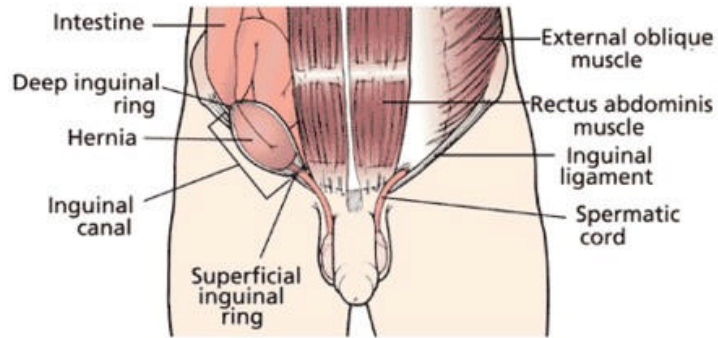
- Follow safe practices when you move heavy things.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Try to avoid becoming constipated.

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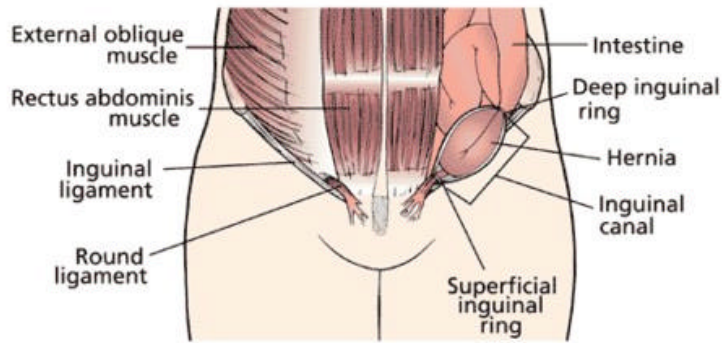
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Male



Female