

Hernia Repair

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout is for patients who are having hernia repair surgery. It explains how to prepare, what to expect, and how to plan for recovery.

What is hernia repair?

A *hernia* is a weakness or tear (*rupture*) in a muscle in your abdomen or groin. A hernia can cause abdominal contents to bulge out.

Hernia repair, also called *herniorrhaphy*, is surgery to treat a hernia. This surgery can be done 2 ways:

- **Laparoscopic repair:** In this surgery, small incisions are made in the abdomen. Your surgeon will use a special camera and instruments to repair your hernia through these incisions. You will be given general *anesthetic* (medicine that will make you fall asleep) to keep you comfortable. A synthetic (man-made) mesh will be placed under the weakened area to make it stronger.
- **Open repair:** In this surgery, an incision is made over the hernia. Synthetic mesh is usually placed on top of the weakened area. Most patients have a general anesthetic for this type of repair.

Getting Ready

- **Learn about the surgery:** Read the “Hernia Surgery” handout you were given. If you have any questions, please talk with your doctor or nurse.
- **Aspirin and other medicines:** Do **not** take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 1 week before your operation. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). See attached sheet for more information.



Ask your doctor or nurse any questions that you have about your surgery.

- **Shaving:** Do **not** shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgery site, do **not** shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.
- **Make plans for a ride home:** You must have a responsible adult drive you home from the hospital and stay with you the first night. You cannot drive yourself, or take a taxi or bus alone home from the hospital.

24 Hours Before Your Surgery

- **Take 2 showers:** Take 1 shower the night before, and a 2nd shower the morning of your surgery.
 - Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body. Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.)
 - Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.
- **Arrival time:** The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your surgery. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206.598.6334.
- The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will remind you:
 - Not to eat or drink after a certain time
 - Which of your regular medicines to take or not take
 - To sip only enough water to swallow your pills

Day of Surgery

At Home

- Do not eat or drink anything the morning of your surgery.
- If the pre-surgery nurse told you to take any medicines, remember to sip only enough water to swallow your pills.

At the Hospital

To reduce your risk of infection, you will be covered with a heating blanket to warm your body while you wait to go into the operating room. Ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

After Your Operation

Patients are usually ready to go home the day of surgery. You will need a responsible adult to drive you home and stay with you overnight.

For Your Safety

Medicine given during and after your surgery will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery, do **not**:

- Drive or travel alone
- Use machines
- Drink alcohol
- Sign any legal papers
- Be responsible for another person

Incision Care

- Plastic bandages will cover your incisions. You may shower at 24 hours after surgery however leave the plastic bandages on. 48 hours after surgery remove the plastic bandages.
- Under the bandages, white tapes called Steri-Strips will cover your incisions. **Do not take them off.** They will fall off on their own in about a week.
- Check your incisions every day for signs of infection such as redness, increased swelling, bad-smelling drainage, or an increase in the amount of drainage from your wound.

Pain Control

- For several weeks after your surgery, you will feel pain or pulling at the hernia repair site. Use this as your guide to not overdo activities. See page 4 for more activity guidelines.
- Please take your medicines as directed on your discharge paperwork. If your pain is not controlled by your prescription pain medicine, you can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or NSAIDs (aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen).
- Take your other usual medicines as prescribed.

Constipation

Prescription pain medicines often cause constipation (hard stools). If you are taking prescription pain medicine, you may need to take a laxative. Try not to strain when having a bowel movement.

To help ease constipation, drink plenty of fluids. If you drink beverages that contain caffeine such as coffee or black tea, drink extra fluids.

Swelling

Swelling is common after this surgery. You may want to use a cold pack on your surgery site in the week after surgery.

Wrap a clean towel around the cold pack to protect your skin. Place the cold pack on your incision for 10 minutes, then remove for 10 minutes and repeat.

For Men

Scrotal swelling is common for men after repair of groin hernias. If you have scrotal swelling, raise your scrotum by placing a rolled towel under it when you lie down. You may also use cold packs on the scrotal area (see above).

Urination

Your nerves can be irritated by surgery. We will make sure you can urinate before we let you go home. If you have any trouble urinating at home, call 206.598.4477.

Activity

If you had **open repair**:

- Do **not** lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 weeks after your operation. (A gallon of water weighs a little more than 8 pounds.)
- Avoid any activity that puts pressure in your abdomen for 4 weeks.
- After 4 to 5 weeks, you can start doing your usual activities and lifting. Slowly increase your activity back to your usual level.

If you had **laparoscopic repair**:

- Do **not** lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 2 weeks after your operation. (A gallon of water weighs a little more than 8 pounds.)
- After 2 weeks, you can start doing your regular exercises and lifting.

When to Call

Call **206-598-4477** weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. or your doctor if you have:

- Any difficulty urinating
- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
 - Redness
 - Increasing pain
 - Swelling
 - Drainage
- Nausea, vomiting, or both
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call Surgical Specialties Center: 206-598-4477.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the resident on call for Surgery to be paged.

Or, ask for your surgeon to be paged:

Dr. _____