# Hernia

A hernia occurs when an internal organ pushes out through a weak spot in the belly (*abdominal*) wall. Hernias most commonly occur in the groin and around the navel. Hernias also can occur through by cut (*incision*) made by the surgeon after an abdominal operation. Hernias often can be pushed back into place (*reduced*). Most hernias tend to get worse over time. Problems occur when abdominal contents get stuck in the opening (*incarcerated hernia*). The blood supply becomes blocked or impaired (*strangulated hernia*). Because of these risks, you may require surgery to repair the hernia.

## CAUSES

- Heavy lifting.
- Prolonged coughing.
- Straining to move your bowels.
- Hernias can also occur through a cut (*incision*) by a surgeon after an abdominal operation.

## HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Bed rest is not required. You may continue your normal activities. Avoid heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) or straining. Cough gently. If you are a smoker it is best to stop. Even the best hernia repair can break down with the continual strain of coughing. Even if you do not have your hernia repaired, a cough will continue to aggravate the problem.
- Do not wear anything tight over your hernia. Do not try to keep it in with an outside bandage or truss. These can damage abdominal contents if they are trapped within the hernia sac.
- Eat a normal diet. Avoid constipation. Straining over long periods of time will increase hernia size and encourage breakdown of repairs. If you cannot do this with diet alone, stool softeners may be used.

## SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

You have problems (*symptoms*) of a trapped (*incarcerated*) hernia:

- You develop an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), or as your caregiver suggests.
- You develop increasing abdominal pain.
- You feel sick to your stomach (*nausea*) and vomiting.
- The hernia is stuck outside the abdomen, looks discolored, feels hard, or is tender.
- You have any changes in your bowel habits or in the hernia that is unusual for you.
- You have increased pain or swelling around the hernia.
- You cannot push the hernia back in place by applying gentle pressure while lying down.

## MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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