

Hernias

A hernia occurs when an organ, intestine or fatty tissue squeezes through a hole or a weak spot in the surrounding muscle or connective tissue. Hernias often occur at the abdominal wall. Sometimes a hernia can be visible as an external bulge particularly when straining or bearing down.

Types of Hernias

The most common types of hernias are:

- **Inguinal:** occurs in the inner groin
- **Femoral:** occurs in the upper thigh/outer groin
- **Incisional:** occurs through an incision or scar in the abdomen
- **Ventral:** occurs in the general abdominal/ventral wall
- **Umbilical:** occurs at the belly button
- **Hiatal:** occurs inside the abdomen, along the upper stomach/diaphragm (For discussion of hiatal hernias, see [Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease \(GERD\)](#))

Causes

Most hernias are caused by a combination of pressure and an opening or weakness of muscle or connective tissue. The pressure pushes an organ or tissue through the opening or weak spot. Sometimes the muscle weakness is present at birth but more often it occurs later in life. Anything that causes an increase in abdominal pressure can cause a hernia, including obesity, lifting heavy objects, diarrhea or constipation, or persistent coughing or sneezing. Poor nutrition, smoking, and overexertion can weaken muscles and contribute to the likelihood of a hernia.

Treatment Options

Hernia repairs are common—more than one million hernia repairs are performed each year in the U.S. Approximately 800,000 are to repair inguinal hernias and the rest are for other types of hernias. *Rutkow, I.M. (2003). Demographic and Socieconomic Aspects of Hernia Repair in the United States in 2003. Surgical Clinics of North America; 83(5):1045-51, v-vi.*

Surgical

- **Open Repair** - The surgeon makes an incision near the hernia and the weak muscle area is repaired. Open repair can be done with or without surgical mesh. Open repair that uses

sutures without mesh is referred to as primary closure. Primary closure is used to repair inguinal hernias in infants, small hernias, strangulated or infected hernias.

The use of surgical mesh may also improve patient outcomes through decreased operative time and minimized recovery time. However, recovery time depends on the type of hernia, the surgical approach, and the patient's condition both before and after surgery.

Hernia Repair Surgery Complications

The most common complications for surgical repair of hernias—with or without mesh—are pain, infection, hernia recurrence, bleeding, fluid build-up at the surgical site (seroma).

The most common adverse events following hernia repair with mesh are pain, infection, hernia recurrence, adhesion, and bowel obstruction. Some other potential adverse events that can occur following hernia repair with mesh are mesh migration and mesh shrinkage (contraction).

The above abbreviated information was obtained from the following website:

<https://general.surgery.ucsf.edu/conditions--procedures/hernia-overview.aspx>