

Information for Patients

Surgery (an operation) to repair an inguinal hernia should only be carried out for a very few clinical reasons. Medical evidence tells us that even if your hernia causes you mild symptoms, it is safe to monitor this. Most people will never go on to need an operation.

About the condition

An inguinal hernia is a bulging of part of your bowel through into your groin. People may see or feel a lump under the skin, which may be a bit uncomfortable and may disappear on lying down. This bulge is caused by a weakening of the wall of your abdomen and tends to affect men more often than women. The majority cause either no, or only very mild symptoms, such as occasional groin discomfort.

Very few people will go on to develop serious problems with their inguinal hernia that will require an emergency operation. These problems include blockage of the bowel or very intense pain. It is important that patients seek medical help if they notice sudden changes.

What are the **BENEFITS** of the operation?

The operation may reduce the likelihood of the hernia causing serious symptoms, or the bowel becoming blocked.

What are the **RISKS**?

Surgery carries some risks and may not always prevent some serious symptoms from occurring. The risks of inguinal hernia surgery include infection, bleeding, pain and how the anaesthetic may affect you. There is also a risk of damage to the bowel and that the hernia may come back again in the future. Medical evidence shows that there is no significant difference in the number of people suffering pain after having surgery compared to those who didn't have surgery.

What are the **ALTERNATIVES**?

You can monitor any changes in the symptoms of your hernia. These changes may include increased pain, not being able to push the bulge back in, or vomiting and constipation. If these occur then you should urgently speak to a doctor. Your doctor will be able to offer more advice on managing the symptoms of the hernia.

What if you do **NOTHING**?

You will avoid an operation and the risks of an operation. If you do nothing there is a very small risk that you will go on to develop serious problems associated with the hernia that will require an emergency operation at a later date. But most inguinal hernias do not need an operation.

For more information see [Inguinal hernia repair - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

You can find out more about the [Evidence Based Interventions](#) programme online