

Healthy Habits

June 2007

Tips for reaching and maintaining your optimum state of health

June is Dedicated to Hernia Awareness

Every year nearly 700,000 Americans see a doctor for a hernia-related problem but it is believed that hundreds of thousands more suffer silently. National Hernia Awareness Month is about raising public awareness of hernias and effective hernia treatment.

How Do Hernias Occur?

A hernia occurs when part of an organ (usually the intestines) protrudes through a weak point or tear in the thin muscular wall that holds the abdominal organs in place. Hernias, although often associated with heavy lifting, have various types and causes and may occur in males and females of literally any age, even birth.

In infants and children, hernias occur when the lining around the abdominal organs does not close properly before birth. About 5 out of 100 children have inguinal hernias (more boys than girls). Some may not have symptoms until adulthood.

Could I have a Hernia?

Even though there is no singular obvious cause for hernias, awareness of the common symptoms can be a great help in identifying their occurrence. Symptoms include:

- ✓ Groin discomfort aggravated by bending
- ✓ A tender groin lump or scrotum lump
- ✓ A non-tender bulge or lump in children

Furthermore if you have a history of extra weight, chronic cough, chronic constipation, enlarged prostate or a family history of hernias or cystic fibrosis, you may be more prone to develop a hernia. A doctor can confirm the presence of a hernia during a physical exam. The mass may increase in size when coughing, bending, lifting, or straining. The hernia (bulge) may not be obvious in infants and children, except when the child is crying or coughing.



Could you be suffering from a hernia?
Don't delay--find out the facts and talk to your doctor right away.

Is There Treatment for Hernias?

Fortunately the answer is yes. Although most hernias do require surgery, the outcome is usually good with treatment and a recurrence of the problem is very rare. During hernia repair, the herniated segment of bowel can usually be placed back into the abdominal cavity through an incision and the muscle and fascia can be stitched closed to repair the hernia. Identifying hernias in a timely manner is crucial, however. An unchecked hernia can possibly lead to a strangulated intestine, gangrene, and even death.

What Should I Do?

Using proper lifting techniques, exercising and maintaining a healthy body weight, avoiding constipation by eating plenty of fiber and going to the bathroom as soon as you have the urge are all simple methods that go a long way towards preventing hernias. If you have persistent groin pain, swelling, or a bulge or your child has an umbilical hernia that fails to heal on its own by the time your child is 5 years old, you should call your healthcare provider right away. Read more about hernias, treatment and prevention in Optima's Health Information Library at www.healthcontent.optimahealth.com.

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