

The Tear That Often Needs Repair



“Surgical repair is the only method to correct hernias and one of the most common procedures, which involves using a synthetic mesh to bridge the defect. The typical recovery period is four to six weeks, and the surgery is effective in alleviating pain and preventing more serious complications.”

Kent Greenwood, MD, FACS
Surgeon, Nashoba Valley Medical Center

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, approximately five million Americans have a hernia and hernia repair is one of the most common types of surgery performed in the U.S. Typically, hernias occur when a tear or weakness develops in the abdominal muscle wall or tissue, causing the intestines or body fat to protrude through this weakened area.

Individuals may be predisposed to hernias as a result of weak abdominal muscles or a defect in the abdominal wall from birth. Hernias can be caused or aggravated by obesity, lifting heavy objects, repetitive twisting and straining (as with certain sports), constipation, a persistent cough, or pregnancy.

There are a number of different types of hernias, which include:

- **Inguinal hernias** are a type of abdominal hernia, which occur when a portion of intestine or internal fat protrudes through a weakness in the abdominal wall in the groin. These are the most common type of hernia and they occur more often in males than females.
- **Umbilical hernias** are most common in newborns and occur when intestines or fat bulge through the abdominal wall under the navel. Umbilical hernias generally go away on their own within a year or so, but may require treatment if they grow or cause pain. Umbilical hernias can also occur in overweight adults or women who have experienced multiple pregnancies.
- **Incisional hernias** occur when an internal organ pushes through a weakness in the abdominal wall resulting from a previous surgery.
- **A femoral hernia** appears as a bulge in the upper thigh just under the groin. It is more common in women than in men.

Are hernias dangerous?

Although hernias are common and rarely dangerous, they should not be ignored. With the exception of many umbilical hernias in infants, they will not heal on their own and will increase in size over time. Hernias can be serious if a portion of the intestine becomes trapped (strangulated) and its blood supply is cut off, causing severe pain, nausea, and vomiting. This is an emergency situation.

How are hernias treated?

Hernias almost always require surgical treatment to push the protrusion back into place and repair the abdominal wall.

Discuss with your doctor the risks and benefits of having a hernia repair surgery. Factors like overall health, location of hernia and complications will play a role in the decision.

Find more information about Nashoba Valley Medical Center's surgical services, at www.nashobamed.org/SurgicalServices.

*Source: Hernia Resource Center, www.herniainfo.com

*Source: EBSCO DynaMed, www.ebscohost.com/dynamed