



## PATIENT AND FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET

### *Inguinal Hernia*

#### **What is an inguinal hernia?**

An inguinal hernia develops when an opening from the abdomen to the groin does not close during fetal development.

- When a baby boy is growing in the womb, the testicles first grow in his abdomen. As the baby boy develops, the testicles travel down into the scrotum.
- In little girls, this tunnel also exists (called a *processus vaginalis*).
- This tunnel usually closes. However, if the tunnel does not close, an opening is left from the abdomen into the inguinal canal where a piece of bowel or an ovary can get trapped.

#### **Who gets an inguinal hernia?**

Inguinal hernias are more common in boys and in premature infants. However, any baby may develop an inguinal hernia

#### **How do I know if my child has an inguinal hernia?**

*Here are some of the symptoms your child may have:*

- Many parents notice a bulge when the child is crying or sitting on the toilet attempting to move their bowels that then disappears when the child relaxes.
- The bulge is intestine (bowel) or an ovary in the inguinal canal.
- Sometimes, the opening is very small and only fluid can pass through. This is called a hydrocele.
- An inguinal hernia is diagnosed by examining your child. There is a visible bulge in the child's groin. There are no special tests or procedures required to diagnose an inguinal hernia. If you see a bulge, take a picture and then make an appointment with your pediatrician or a pediatric surgeon. The picture may help them with the diagnosis.

#### **How is the decision made that surgery is needed?**

- Once a hernia is noticed, an operation is generally scheduled as soon as possible.
- The surgery is necessary in order to prevent the bowel or ovary in the inguinal canal from becoming trapped (*incarcerated*) or strangulated (*blood supply decreased*).
- Symptoms of a strangulated hernia are inconsolable crying and a hard, painful bulge in the groin.
  - If this happens, it is a surgical emergency because the intestines may not have a good blood supply.

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#### **How is an inguinal hernia treated?**

- The treatment for an inguinal hernia is surgery.

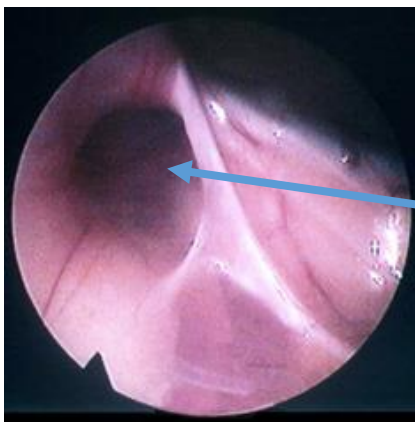
#### *What should I bring the day of surgery?*

- A variety of favorite toys, or books to preoccupy your child and encourage quiet time.
- A special toy or security blanket that may help to comfort your child.
- Extra pacifiers or a teething toy may help soothe your baby (if age appropriate), since they will not be able to eat or drink anything before surgery.
- A change of clothes and loose clothes for you child to wear home from the hospital.
- Please do not eat in front of your child before surgery.

#### *What happens during surgery?*

A small incision will be made in the groin crease, the bowel or ovary will be replaced in the abdomen, and the opening from the abdomen will be closed.

- Your child's surgeon may recommend checking the opposite side during surgery for a hernia because it is common to have a hernia on both sides.
- Blood work is not usually necessary and may be needed only if your child has other medical problems.
- Your surgeon will probably use skin glue over the area or a small bandage.



Laparoscopic view of an inguinal hernia  
(patent processus vaginalis)

#### **What happens after surgery?**

##### *When can I be with my child again?*

As soon as your child wakes up after surgery, someone from the recovery room will call you so you can be with your child again.

##### *Will my child have any pain?*

- Your child will have some discomfort after the surgery that can be treated with over the counter pain medicines. Your surgeon may prescribe a stronger pain medication as well.
- Give pain medicines around the clock (every four to six hours as directed) for the first 24-48 hours and then as needed after that for the next three to four days.



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#### **How do I care for my child at home?**

##### *Care of the incision:*

- There will be an incision in the skin crease at the groin or at the belly button.
- Reinforced sticky bandages (Steri-strips) or skin glue may be applied.
- A clear plastic dressing or a gauze dressing may cover the incision. The clear plastic dressing is waterproof. Remove this dressing according to your surgeon's instructions.
- It is not unusual to see bruising and swelling for a few days, especially of the scrotum in boys.

##### *Activity limitations:*

- Normal activity for age. No gym, recess, contact sports or other vigorous activity until your surgeon says it is okay to do so. This can be up to 4 weeks.

##### *Diet:*

- Your child may have their usual diet. Your child may feel sick to their stomach for a short time after the surgery. If this happens, offer small frequent amounts of clear liquids such as juice, water, or Pedialyte®.

##### *Bathing:*

- Sponge bathe your child until the bandage is taken off. Once the bandage is taken off, your child can resume normal bathing.
- If there is no bandage, your child may resume normal bathing as instructed by the surgical team.

#### **When should I call the office?**

##### *If your child experiences any of the following, please call our office:*

- Continued pain not relieved with pain medications
- Fever [Temperature > 100.5°F (38.0°C)]
- Bleeding, drainage from the surgical site
- Not drinking as well and peeing less
- Vomiting

##### *Your child will need to follow up with the surgeon.*

##### *You will receive specific instructions for follow up when your child is discharged.*

Please don't hesitate to call our office if you have any problems or concerns.

Surgical provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Office Number: \_\_\_\_\_

After hours number, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for allowing us to care for your child.*