

Women and Children's Directorate

Parent Information Leaflet – Inguinal (Groin) Hernia

You have been given this leaflet because your child has been diagnosed with a groin (inguinal) hernia and is waiting for surgery.

What is an inguinal (groin) hernia?

A 'hernia' forms when one part of the body, or one of the body's tissues, pushes through the muscle or tissue wall surrounding it. Children can have different types of hernia, and an 'inguinal hernia' is one which occurs in the groin.

Inguinal hernias are more common in boys, due to the way their testicles moved down from their tummy, into the scrotum during development. This movement can leave a small tunnel through which tissue from the intestines can pass, forming an inguinal hernia. Hernias can happen on one or both sides of the body.

Most inguinal hernias in children are called 'indirect' hernias, as they take the 'long way round' into the groin through the tunnel formed during development. Hernias in adults can be different, as they often pass 'directly' into the groin through weak tissues.

Most groin hernias in children require an operation to repair them, but as long as your child is well this does not need to be done as an emergency. You might be sent home while you wait for a date for the surgery.

What are the possible complications?

In most children, an inguinal hernia is noticed as a 'lump' in the groin, that can 'come and go' depending on what a child is doing and how active they are. They can often be more visible if a child is crying, coughing or straining to poo, and can disappear when a child lies down.

Hernias don't usually cause pain, but can become uncomfortable as they get bigger as a child grows. Sometimes there is a risk of the tissue in the hernia 'getting stuck' and its blood supply can then be affected. This can cause pain and sometimes damage the intestines if they are also trapped inside the hernia.

If a hernia becomes 'stuck' your child may require surgery **urgently**.

Below are some of the signs and symptoms which should prompt you to bring your child for urgent medical review at the hospital.