

# INGUINAL HERNIAS

## What is an inguinal hernia?

A “hernia” is an opening (usually through a tissue wall) that allows contents to pass from one area to another. Hernias occur when certain openings fail to close during development. “Inguinal” relates to the area (canal) where the abdomen joins the leg – also known as the groin area.

## Why did my baby get a hernia?

The abdominal cavity has openings where blood vessels, nerves and other contents such as testicles can enter the scrotum and lower limb. These openings should close over during development. If they do not close over, the intestine may protrude into the inguinal canal, which appears as a lump in the girl or an enlarged scrotum in a boy.

## Which babies are at risk of inguinal hernias?

Premature infants, male infants and babies with chronic lung disease are at risk of developing inguinal hernias.

## Can an inguinal hernia cause problems?

If the intestine gets caught in the inguinal canal, the blood supply to that area of intestine or the testicle may be affected. This can cause the area of bowel to die or rupture, or the testicle to be injured.

## What is done for an inguinal hernia?

Inguinal hernias require an operation to close the opening from the abdominal cavity. A paediatric surgeon will work out with the medical staff in the nursery the best time for surgery to be performed. As long as the hernia is reducible (the contents easily go back into the abdomen), the surgery is usually performed when the baby is close to their term due date and ready to go home. If the hernia becomes irreducible surgery will be done on a more urgent basis.

## What does the surgery involve?

Your baby will be fasted from feeds for 3-4 hours prior to the surgery. Your baby will be given a short anaesthetic for the procedure. A small incision will be made in the skin crease between the abdomen and the leg. The hernia opening will be closed with sutures. Both right and left inguinal canals will be repaired, even though only one side may appear to have a hernia. Your baby will return to the nursery and be able to feed again when they have adequately woken from the anaesthetic. Your baby may require some pain relief post-operatively, paracetamol is usually adequate.

If you have any further questions please ask the medical or nursing staff.