

# Your baby's inguinal hernia repair

**This information gives information about the procedure to repair your baby's inguinal hernia. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your baby.**

## What is an inguinal hernia?

Inguinal hernias in babies happen when the channel that normally occurs between the tummy (abdomen) and groin, during their development in the womb, fails to close. Intestine (bowel) can push through this open channel causing a lump in the tummy. This type of hernia is very common, particularly in premature babies, and needs surgery to correct it. It can occur on either side of the groin, or on both sides.

The bowel that pushes through the opening usually moves in and out easily, but sometimes it can become trapped. This is called strangulation, and can result in serious infection and problems with the bowel. This operation should correct the hernia before any of these complications arise. We usually do this surgery a few days before your baby's planned discharge from the neonatal unit. If your baby has a hernia on both sides they are usually repaired at the same time.

## What the operation involves

Your baby will need a general anaesthetic. This means they will be asleep during the operation and not feel anything. Please ask for our information, **Your baby's operation**. Your baby should not have any breast milk for 4 hours before surgery, nor formula milk for 6 hours before surgery. While your baby is not feeding, we will keep them hydrated with fluids through a small tube (cannula) which is put into a vein.

The surgeon will do the operation either as open (traditional) surgery or a laparoscopic (keyhole) procedure. This will be discussed with you before the surgery.

Your baby will have stitches or Steri-Strips™ (strips of tape) to close the skin. Stitches are usually dissolvable, which means that they don't need to be removed, and Steri-Strips usually fall off on their own.

## Asking for your permission (consent)

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your child's care and treatment. You will be asked if you consent to the procedure. If you do consent, this confirms that you understand what the surgery involves, and you agree to your child having it. If you would like more information about our consent process, please speak to a member of staff caring for your child.

## Risks of the surgery

The repair of an inguinal hernia is usually simple, but as with any operation that requires an anaesthetic there are risks. The surgeon and anaesthetist (specialist in anaesthetics) will explain these risks in detail, but the general surgical risks are:

- There might be some bruising near where the cut (incision) was made, and sometimes some swelling too. This should settle over a few weeks.
- The wound might get infected. If this happens, your baby will be given oral (by mouth) antibiotics.
- For boys only, there can be injuries to the spermatic cord (the cord that supplies the testicles with blood) or blood vessels, as these are near the area of surgery.
- Hernias can return on the same side (about 1 in 100 cases), or a new hernia could appear on the opposite side (about 5 in 100 cases).

For more information about general anaesthetics, including risks, please ask for a copy of our information, **Your child's general anaesthetic**.

## Will your baby be in any pain?

While your baby is under general anaesthetic they will not feel any pain. Near the end of the surgery, the anaesthetist will give your baby a local anaesthetic to numb the wound site. This will help to minimise any pain for a few hours after surgery. The local anaesthetic is given as an injection in the lower spine (caudal injection) or into the area around the hernia. We will prescribe paracetamol for your baby to keep them comfortable.

You should always discuss any concerns about your baby's pain with the nurse looking after your baby. If you want to know more about caudal injections, please ask for a copy of our information, **Caudal analgesia**.

## After surgery

After an anaesthetic, a baby's breathing pattern can be different for a few hours, so we will observe your baby closely. At first, this will be done in the recovery department and then by the nurses on the neonatal unit. Your baby can have a milk feed as soon as they are fully awake.

If St Thomas' Hospital is not your local hospital, your baby will usually be ready to return to your local hospital the next day.

## Caring for your baby after surgery

Keep the wound dry for 2 days after the operation. After this you can bathe them as normal. You must seek medical advice if:

- you see any redness around the wound
- there is oozing from the wound
- your baby has a high temperature (fever) that does not come down with paracetamol.

These signs and symptoms might mean your baby has an infection, and needs antibiotics.

### Contact us

If you have any questions about your baby's inguinal hernia repair please contact the neonatal unit, **phone** 020 7188 8846. We're available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

For more information on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **web** [www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.evelinalondon.nhs.uk/leaflets)