

# Your baby's inguinal hernia repair

The aim of this information sheet is to answer some of the questions you may have about the procedure to repair your baby's inguinal hernia. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for your baby.

## What is an inguinal hernia?

An inguinal hernia occurs where there is a weakness in the muscle around the groin, resulting in the intestine (bowel) bulging through and causing a lump. 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. Sometimes a hernia can occur on both sides.

## Why does my baby need an operation?

The bowel that bulges through the weakness usually moves in and out easily, but sometimes can become trapped. This is called strangulation, and can result in serious infection and problems with the bowel. The aim of this operation is to correct the hernia before any of these complications arise. We will usually do this 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 does the operation involve?

The operation requires your baby to have a general anaesthetic. Please ask for a copy of our leaflet, **Your baby's operation**. Your baby should not have any breast milk for four hours before surgery, nor formula milk for six hours before surgery. Whilst your baby is not feeding, we will keep them hydrated with fluids through a cannula (small tube) which will be placed into a vein.

The surgeon will perform either an open or laparoscopic (keyhole) procedure. This will be discussed with you before the operation.

Your baby will have stitches or steri-strips (strips of plaster) 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.

## Are there any risks to the operation?

The repair of an inguinal hernia is usually straightforward, but as with any operation that requires an anaesthetic there are risks. The surgeon and anaesthetist (doctor who specialises in anaesthetics to stop the patient feeling pain during a procedure) will explain these risks in detail, but the general surgical risks are outlined below.

- There may be some bruising near where the cut was made and sometimes swelling may occur. This should settle over a few weeks.
- The wound may become infected. If this happens, your baby will be given antibiotics by mouth.
- 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 close to the area of surgery.
- Hernias can return on the same side (around one in 100 cases), or a new hernia could appear on the opposite side (around four or five in 100 cases).

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

## Will my 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 for a number of hours following surgery to minimize pain. The local anaesthetic will be given either as an injection in the lower spine called a caudal injection or into the area around the hernia. We will prescribe paracetamol for your baby for further pain relief to keep your baby comfortable.

You should always discuss any concerns about your baby's pain with the nurse looking after your baby. Should you want more information about the caudal injection mentioned above please ask for a copy of our leaflet, **Caudal analgesia**.

## What happens after surgery?

After an anaesthetic, a baby's breathing pattern can differ for a few hours, so we will observe your baby closely. Initially this will be done in the recovery department and then by the nurses on the Neonatal Unit. Your baby will be able to 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 two days following the operation. After this you can bathe your baby 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 that does not come down with paracetamol.

These signs and symptoms may mean your baby has an infection, and may need antibiotics.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your baby's inguinal hernia repair please contact the Neonatal Unit, **t:** 020 7188 8846. We are available seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

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

## Evelina London Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's medicines, please speak to the staff caring for them or contact our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 3003, Monday to Friday, 10am-5pm **e:** [letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:letstalkmedicines@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)  
**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

**t:** 111 **w:** [111.nhs.uk](http://111.nhs.uk)

## NHS website

Online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you take control of your health and wellbeing.

**w:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

**t:** 0800 731 0319 **e:** [members@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:members@gstt.nhs.uk) **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership)

## Was this leaflet useful?

We want to make sure the information you receive is helpful to you. If you have any comments about this leaflet, we would be happy to hear from you, fill in our simple online form, **w:** [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets), or **e:** [patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:patientinformationteam@gstt.nhs.uk)

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