

Umbilical Hernia

What is an umbilical hernia?

A sac pushes through an opening under the skin at the navel or belly button area (umbilicus). The sac often has fluid. Sometimes intestine may be in the sack as well.

What causes it?

This hernia is present at birth. It happens because the muscles have not completely closed around the belly button.

Many umbilical hernias will close within the first 2 years of life. As a child begins to crawl and walk, the muscles around the belly button will come together. The hernia may get smaller or close completely.

hernia



How does it affect my child?

The hernia may be present all the time. Some umbilical hernias get larger when your child cries or strains. The hernia normally does not cause pain.

How is it treated?

If the hernia does not close during your child's first two years of life, it can be fixed with surgery. Your doctor will watch your child closely to see if surgery is needed. If your child has surgery, they will go home the same day.

Do not tape or bind the stomach. Doing this may hurt your child.

How do I prepare my child for surgery?

- **Your child should not eat or drink before the surgery.** This is very important. If your child eats or drinks, the surgery must be delayed or cancelled. Follow the guidelines in the surgery information you are given. If you do not get this information, ask your doctor or nurse for the "So Your Child Is Having Surgery" brochure.
- Call your child's doctor if your child has either of the following problems within two days (48 hours) before the surgery:
 - A temperature over 101°F (38.5°C).
 - A cold that includes coughing and/or a runny nose.



ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- A hernia that gets hard or tender, or it does not go back in when your child relaxes.
- Pain or is vomiting.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.