

Education

Groin Hernia: Brief Version

What is a groin hernia?

A hernia happens when a part of your bowel pushes through a weak area in the muscles of your belly. It is called a groin hernia when it happens in the area where the legs join the lower body.

A groin hernia can become a serious problem if your bowel gets trapped in the gap. Then blood cannot get to that part of your bowel and that part of the bowel may die. This can make you very sick.

What causes a groin hernia?

A hernia may be caused by anything that causes the bowel to push against a weak area in the belly. Some people are born with a weakness in their groin muscles. But a groin hernia might happen to anyone when they:

- lift heavy objects
- cough or sneeze a lot
- push too hard when you have a bowel movement
- are overweight
- are pregnant.

Men with enlarged prostates can sometimes get a hernia from pushing too hard to urinate.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms you may have are:

- a lump that can be pushed back in
- pain in your lower belly or groin, especially when you are moving around
- a lump that cannot be pushed back in, which means that the bowel or an organ may be trapped.

How is it diagnosed?

Your health care provider will ask you questions and check you for signs of a hernia.

How is it treated?

The main treatment is surgery to repair the opening in the muscle wall. Sometimes, mesh is put over the weak spot to cover it.

How can I take care of myself?

- Follow your health care provider's instructions.
- Ask your provider if you need a groin support.
- Try not to become constipated. Eat healthy foods that are high in fiber. Take stool softeners if needed.
- Use laxatives or enemas only if your provider tells you to.

How can I prevent another groin hernia?

- If you have to lift or move heavy things at your job, try to change your job duties.
- Be careful when you move heavy things. Learn to lift, pull, or push things the correct way.

- Lose weight if you are overweight.
- Don't smoke. This will help prevent coughing.
- Eat healthy foods that have a lot of fiber to help prevent constipation.

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