



General surgery – hernia repair



Version 1: May 2022

The contents of this information have been reviewed and approved by the clinical governance committee Bedford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.



Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the ability to provide routine elective services within the NHS. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital.

There are a number of different procedures which are part of the general surgery specialty, and the below is guidance for one particular specialty – hernia repair. Further information about other common procedures can be found through the below link:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Herniaprocedures

Hernia repair

A hernia happens when an internal part of the body pushes through a weakness in the muscle or surrounding tissue wall. Your muscles are usually strong and tight enough to keep your intestines and organs in place, but a hernia can develop if there are any weak spots. Hernias can be repaired using surgery to push the bulge back into place and strengthen the weakness in the abdominal wall.

The operation is usually recommended if you have a hernia that causes pain, severe or persistent symptoms, or if any serious complications develop.

The hernia repair may be done under local or general anaesthesia. It can be an open or key hole operation, with or without using a synthetic mesh to strengthen the weakness of the hernia defect based on the type and size of hernia defect. In spite of the repair, in a very small percentage of cases the hernia may reappear again after sometime.

Guidance for patients

Whilst you are waiting for your procedure, it is important that you keep as active and medically fit as your condition will allow. Regular exercise and good general health can help to improve your recovery from surgery and reduce the likelihood of further complications developing.

For patients awaiting a hernia repair, gentle exercise is recommended. The key is to focus on exercises that do not put strain on the area where your hernia is located and avoid activities such as lifting furniture, boxes, or other heavy objects. If you have an abdominal hernia, you should avoid exercises which involve straining or pulling your stomach. You could try:

- Walking
- Gentle jogging
- Swimming

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- Gentle yoga
- Cycling

Weight

If you are waiting for a repair of an abdominal wall hernia, it is highly recommended to keep a healthy weight. This would improve your surgery outcome and improve your recovery. Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- [One You Eat Better](#) is a website which includes the [Easy Meals app](#) for healthy meals and the [Change4Life Food Scanner](#) to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet
- Better Health - Get Active is a website which includes tips on getting active for all
- The NHS Better Health website provides online support to help you lose weight and includes access to the NHS 12-week weight loss plan. The NHS 12-week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

Smoking

If you are a current smoker, it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or doctor's surgery. Make sure you follow any advice, given by your healthcare team, regarding any medication you take.

Reducing the risk of infection

You can reduce your risk of infection in a surgical wound by following the below guidance:

- In the week before the operation, do not shave or wax the area where a cut is likely to be made
- Try to have a bath or shower either the day before or on the day of the operation
- Keep warm around the time of the operation. Let the healthcare team know if you feel cold

Diabetes

If you are diabetic, keep your blood sugar levels under control around the time of your procedure.

COVID-19 vaccination

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If you have not had the coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine, you may be at increased risk of serious illness related to COVID-19 while you recover. Speak to your doctor or healthcare team if you would like to have the vaccine.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

You should go your nearest A&E straight away if you have a hernia and you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Sudden, severe pain
- Vomiting
- Difficulty passing stools or wind.
- The hernia becomes firm or tender, or cannot be pushed back in

These symptoms could mean that either:

- The blood supply to a section of organ or tissue trapped in the hernia has become cut off (strangulation)
- A piece of bowel has entered the hernia and become blocked (obstruction)

A strangulated hernia and obstructed bowel are medical emergencies and needs treatment as soon as possible.

Urgent health advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life threatening emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.



Cancelling your appointment or surgery

We understand that some patients may choose to have their appointment and treatment elsewhere, and we advocate patient choice on where you access treatment. However, we do ask that if you no longer require an appointment with us, you notify us at the soonest possible opportunity so that we can remove you from the waiting list. This can be done via telephone or online.

To change or cancel your surgery admission date, please telephone the contact number on your admission letter between 09:00 – 16:00 Monday to Friday.

To change or cancel your outpatient appointments please call:

For Luton & Dunstable Hospital – 01582 561385
Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 16:00.

For Bedford Hospital – 01234 355122 Ext: 2035
Monday to Friday from 09.00 to 16:00.

Alternatively, you can visit our website to request a change to your appointment here:-

Luton Site: <https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-luton-and-dunstable-university-hospital/>

Bedford site: [Change / Cancel Your Appointment | Bedford Hospital \(bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk\)](https://www.bedfordshirehospitals.nhs.uk/change-cancel-appointment/change-cancel-appointment-bedford-hospital/)

Contact us

For any other queries, please call or email your consultant's secretary. Their contact details will be on the most recent letter from your consultant.