

# **INGUINAL HERNIA**

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## **What is an inguinal hernia?**

A hernia is a weak point in the muscle wall of the abdomen. It is identified by bulge which is often more noticeable when your child cries or is agitated. A hernia can protrude in many areas of the abdomen and if it is low down in the groin it is called an inguinal hernia.

The bulge could be caused by the prolapse of a small part of your child's intestine. This protrusion of the intestine may, at times, cause pain to your child.

## **How is it diagnosed?**

It manifests as a groin swelling which is usually painless but at times it may cause some discomfort, as it continues to swell. The doctor will try to push the contents back in the abdomen and the hernia can go back easily inside the abdomen (reducible), if the child is not crying or straining.

## **Treatment**

Surgical intervention is necessary, as spontaneous cure never occurs. The operation involves making a skin crease incision in the groin area. This procedure is done under general anesthesia, which means your child is made to sleep for the whole procedure. The operation leaves your son with small scar in his groin area, which usually heals without any distress. The child usually settles in a few hours after the operation and can be started on orals after that.

When your child is discharged, advice on care at home will be given.

## **Will it affect the fertility of my child?**

The fertility of your child is not affected if the operation is carried out before any complications. One of the complications that could happen if the inguinal hernia is left untreated is that, the hernia may get stuck and becomes irreducible. This can be very painful and may need emergency treatment.

## **At what age will this operation be done?**

Usually your doctor would not wait for long, once the diagnosis of inguinal hernia is made. This is because of the risk of complications, which may occur if the hernia is not treated surgically.

### **Will my child be in pain after the operation?**

The children have the surgery done under a general anesthetic and at the end of the procedure a local anesthetic block is given in the operated area. This usually keeps the part numb for about 8 hours after the surgery. Subsequent to this, the child is on oral pain killers. Hence, the whole experience is not painful.

### **Can my child do all activities after the operation?**

The patient can do all the normal activities once the anesthetic effect wears off. However, strenuous activities like cycling, swimming, karate, exercises and rapid climbing of stairs could be best avoided for one and a half months post surgery.