

Umbilical Hernia

Definition

- A bulge or swelling in the area of the umbilicus (navel or belly button)

Health Information

Symptoms

- The belly button bulges ('pops out') with crying, straining or coughing
- The bulge may or may not go away when your baby is quiet
- A small round opening (ring) can be felt in the muscles under the hernia
- The opening is always located right underneath the belly button
- Some hernias stay out all the time. Although they can be pushed in, they pop right back out.

Cause

- A defect in the stomach wall that's present at birth and doesn't close
- When pregnant, the umbilical cord's blood vessels go to the mother's placenta. They pass through this opening (ring). Normally, the muscles closes off the ring soon after birth.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Umbilical hernias are very common. They occur in 10 - 20% of children.
- They are easy to diagnose on physical exam. Tests are not needed.
- They almost never cause any problems.
- They are not painful and they never break.
- They do bulge out more with crying, straining or coughing. They also bulge out more after eating. Reason: Due to a full stomach. None of these make the hernia last any longer.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Treatment:

- No treatment is needed.
- Do not bother pushing the hernia back in. Reason: It's not needed and can irritate the skin.

3. Avoid Covering:

- Do not put tape, a coin, or "belly band" over the hernia.
- Reason: This does not speed healing. It can lead to a skin rash or infection.

4. Reasons for Surgery to Close the Defect:

- Your child reaches age 4 and the hernia is still present. Some surgeons wait until age 5.
- The hernia becomes stuck and causes pain or vomiting.
- Any hernia that occurs higher up than the belly button.
- The hernia is very large. that means a muscle opening greater than 1 inch (2.5 cm) across at age 1.

5. What to Expect:

- Most (9 out of 10) close on their own before age 4 years.
- Even some large hernias may close on their own.

Call Your Doctor If

- Hernia causes crying or pain
- Hernia causes vomiting
- Hernia turns red or purple
- Hernia becomes painful (tender) to touch
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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