

Inguinal hernias in premature babies

The Royal Women's Hospital Fact Sheet / www.thewomens.org.au



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What is an inguinal hernia?

An inguinal hernia occurs when a small piece of the bowel slides through a little hole in the abdominal wall and into the scrotum or a pouch in the groin.

Inguinal hernias can occur on one side or both sides of the groin or scrotum.

They are not caused because your baby has been left to cry although they may become obvious when your baby is upset.

Inguinal hernias usually present as a bulge in the groin when your baby strains or cries.

How common are inguinal hernia?

Inguinal hernias are common in babies born prematurely, especially boys. The more immature the baby at birth, the more likely it is that your baby will develop a hernia.

How are inguinal hernias treated?

Inguinal hernias do not go away. Your baby will need to have a small operation to correct the hernia.

The operation is usually done a few days before your baby goes home. It is done at the Royal Children's Hospital.

A doctor will speak with you about the operation. You will be asked to sign a consent form allowing the operation to go ahead.

Your baby will be transported to the Royal Children's by the Newborn Emergency Transport Service (NETS) for the surgery. After the operation, your baby will return to Newborn Intensive and Special Care at the Women's within a day or two. Feeding is usually restarted 6-12 hours after surgery.

Will my baby be in pain?

Your baby will be kept comfortable with pain relief medication.

When will I be able to cuddle my baby?

Your baby will need comforting both before and after the operation.

Before the operation your baby will be 'nil by mouth', which means your baby can't be fed and may be unsettled due to hunger. Cuddling will help to settle your baby.

When your baby wakes after the operation it is also a good idea to comfort with cuddles. As soon as your baby is awake and appears interested in feeding you can offer a small feed.

What happens after we go home?

Your baby will have an appointment to see the Surgeon in Outpatients at the Royal Children's Hospital. It is very uncommon for babies to have problems after hernia repair.

Remember

If your baby develops a groin swelling, tell a nurse or doctor.

After the operation, your baby can be treated normally.

If you have any further questions, please ask the nurses or doctors.

For more information

Your baby's doctor, nurse or care manager are available to answer your questions

References

Royal Children's Hospital Kids Health Information for Parents (http://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/factsheets.cfm?doc_id=12735)

The Royal Women's Hospital

Newborn Intensive & Special Care
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