



Instinctively upon hearing the word “hernia” many people think of a problems and particularly a lump, within the groin. Although groin hernias are the most commonly encountered type, a hernia may be found in a variety of positions in the body. Some require surgical correction and some do not. Those involving the abdominal contents and its wall are treated by general surgeons.

A hernia is an abnormal protrusion of part of the body out of its normal anatomical area of confinement. This normally results in a swelling, pain and in some cases loss of function.

Hernia Types

Abdominal Wall

- Groin Hernia
 - Inguinal
 - Femoral
- Umbilical (belly button) Hernia
- Incisional (surgical site) Hernia
- Unusual Hernias
 - Epigastric
 - Spigelian
 - Lumbar

Abdominal

- Hiatus Hernia
- Internal Hernia

Symptoms

- Swelling (that generally disappears on lying down)
- Pain (usually non specific dragging or aching discomfort worse at the end of the day)
- Loss of function (usually because of pain but may be as a result of distorting an organ's shape)

Complications

Incarceration

Structures (often fat or bowel) become fixed within a hernia and will not disappear with pressure or when lying

Strangulation

An emergency situation where the contents of a hernia by effects of pressure, lose their blood supply and may become gangrenous

In both situations above the hernia may increase in size, become increasingly tender to touch and the overlying skin may become shiny and or red. Should this occur urgent surgical attention should be sought.

Treatment

In virtually all cases where appropriate, surgical correction of a hernia is possible although not all hernias necessarily require such intervention.

Other than the use of support garments or a truss for abdominal wall hernias the only realistic treatment is surgery. Hernias will not get smaller with time indeed most get larger and more symptomatic.

The principles of treatment in all cases are to restore the affected structures to their normal anatomical position and to secure the defect through which the structure has passed. This may be approached in an open or laparoscopic fashion and often a prosthetic mesh is used to strengthen the repair.