

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

General Surgery – Hernia Repair

Introduction

The Covid pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. 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 several different procedures which are part of the general surgery specialty, and the guidance below is for one particular specialty – hernia repair. Further information about other common procedures can be found through at: [Hernia - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

Inguinal Hernia

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.

What tests will the GP do?

- If your General Practitioner (GP) suspects that you have a hernia; prior to referring you to the general surgery service, your GP may refer you for some diagnostic tests, for example an ultrasound. However as diagnostics are not always needed, they may refer you straight away.
- It is important that your GP sends in ALL diagnostic test results that have been performed in primary care or other health centres. This will ensure that your referral is managed appropriately and in a timely manner.





What treatments are available?

A hernia will never heal itself and medicines will not cure it. An abdominal support (truss) may relieve your discomfort but will not heal or repair your hernia. An operation is the best option. Most people can have their operation as a day case patient and will not need to stay in hospital overnight.

Surgical repair is used 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. In spite of the repair, in a very small percentage of cases the hernia may reappear again after some time.

The most common types of surgical hernia repairs include:

- **Traditional repair:** Your surgeon will make an incision (cut), usually over your hernia bulge. The piece of intestine or other organ bulging through your abdominal wall is returned to where it belongs, and the opening is closed by stitching both sides firmly together to repair your abdominal wall.
- **Mesh repair:** The operation is performed as described above. The muscle wall around your hernia is strengthened by placing a fine sterile mesh across the opening to prevent a hernia developing again. A mesh repair can also be carried out using laparoscopic repair (see below).
- **Laparoscopic (keyhole surgery) repair:** Your surgeon will make 3 or 4 small incisions around your hernia. He or she will insert a laparoscope (an instrument like a tiny telescope) into one of these incisions. This lets your surgeon carry out your operation using miniature instruments, through the laparoscope. You can usually return to your normal daily activities sooner than a traditional open operation. This method of hernia repair is not suitable for everyone.

Your doctor will explain the different treatment choices available and advise what he or she feels would be best for you.





A hernia is usually repaired under either:

- **A general anaesthetic** (a state of carefully controlled and supervised unconsciousness that means you are unable to feel any pain)
- **A spinal anaesthetic** (where you are awake but have an injection in your back that numbs the lower part of your body).

Guidance for patients whilst waiting for surgery

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 the following exercises:

Walking	Gentle jogging
cycling	Gentle yoga

General health and wellbeing information

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.

For more general health advice or guidance on how you can support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital for your treatment, please refer to the “General Health Advice” document on Trust’s section of My Planned Care website:

[Surrey and Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust – My Planned Care NHS](#)





What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If your condition worsens or you have a hernia and develop or experience any of the symptoms listed below; you should go to your nearest Accident & Emergency department straight away:

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

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.

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 hours Monday to Friday.**

Contact Us:

To change or cancel your routine outpatient appointments or for further information, please refer to the contact details below:

Call:	Email:	Website:
Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust ☎ 01737 231958	sash.pals@nhs.net For My Planned Care enquiries	Surreyandsussex.nhs.uk

