

## 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. During the pandemic you may have found that you have become 'deconditioned' meaning you have lost fitness or muscle tone, especially through lack of exercise, or may have put on a little weight. Many people have been unable to have their known medical conditions reviewed by their GP or specialist doctors and nurses, recently, or have new medical conditions that have not yet been diagnosed. Now is the time to get yourself Fitter, Better, Sooner in preparation for your surgery.

### Guidance for Patients

Whilst you are waiting for your hernia operation, to repair the weakness in the muscle and body wall, it is important that you look after yourself. Please avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous activities that put further strain on your hernia. Examples include lifting furniture, boxes, heavy objects, or strenuous gardening. For further information regarding your surgery and what to expect before, during and after the procedure please use the link: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/hernia](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hernia)

### Improve Your Health and become More Active

Whether you want to lose weight, get active or quit smoking, Better Health is here with lots of free tools and support.



The link below will help you get started.

<https://www.nhs.uk/better-health>

Your surgeon may have requested that you lose weight and reduce your body mass index (BMI) before you have your surgery. An ideal BMI is between 21-25.

There will be local support groups, within your area, that can provide you with further information about giving up smoking, losing weight and improving you and your families' lifestyle.

## Medical Conditions



Many medical conditions can affect recovery from surgery. It is important to make sure any known conditions are controlled as well as possible ahead of your surgery.

**Diabetes:** Good control of your blood sugar is important to reduce your risk of infections after surgery. If above the acceptable threshold [69mmols] your surgery may be delayed until your diabetes is under better control. Think about your diet and weight and talk to your diabetes nurse or team early to see if they need to make any changes to your treatment.



**Blood pressure:** should be controlled to safe levels to reduce your risk of stroke. Sometimes operations may be delayed if it is too high. Have your blood pressure checked at your surgery well ahead of your operation – some GP surgeries have automated machines so you can pop in any time. If it is high, your GP can check your medications and make any changes needed ahead of the operation.

**Heart, lung, and other medical problems:** If you have any other long-term medical problems, consider asking your GP or nurse for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be. These are the issues that may delay your operation if something ‘abnormal’ is detected at your preassessment appointment.

**Anxiety and mental health:** To maintain a good mental health there is lots of things we can do to help ourselves. • Get good sleep • Spending quality time with others • Live a healthy life; be active, balanced diet. To learn more about how to maintain a good mental health use the link below.

<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/mental-wellbeing-tips/top-tips-to-improve-your-mental-wellbeing>.

Most people feel some anxiety about having surgery. If the thought of going into hospital is making you very anxious or upset, it may be helpful to talk about your concerns with your GP. If you are taking medication for mental health problems, it is important to let the nurse at the hospital know about your medication. They will usually not want you to stop this. They can help organise any support you need for your time in hospital or return home.

Taking an active role in planning and preparing for your operation will help you feel in control, leave hospital sooner and get back to normal more quickly. To learn more about preparing for surgery and access the Fitter Better Sooner toolkit and animation resources use the link; [rcoa.ac.uk/fitterbettersooner](http://rcoa.ac.uk/fitterbettersooner)

### **What should I do if my health is deteriorating and when to get medical advice?**

You should go your nearest A&E straight away if you have a hernia and you develop any of the following symptoms:

- sudden, severe pain
- being sick
- difficulty pooing or passing wind
- the hernia becomes firm or tender, or cannot be pushed back in

These symptoms could mean that either:

- the blood supply to a section of organ or tissue trapped in the hernia has become cut off (strangulation)
- a piece of bowel has entered the hernia and become blocked (obstruction)

A strangulated hernia and obstructed bowel are medical emergencies and need to be treated as soon as possible.

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call the NHS 111 service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week or you can visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk). For something life threatening please dial 999. GP surgeries are still open and can help patients manage their conditions at home whilst they wait for hospital appointments.