

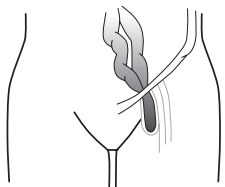
**Q** What is a hernia?

**A** A hernia develops when the outer layers of the abdominal wall weaken, bulge or tear, allowing a portion of the inner lining and intestinal organ tissue to protrude into the defect in the form of a sac. Any part of the abdominal wall can form a hernia, however, the most common site is in the groin. These are called **inguinal** or **femoral** hernias depending on their location, and they account for approximately 80% of all hernia repairs. Other types of hernias are:

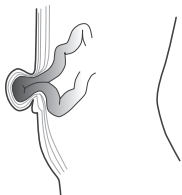
- **Umbilical** hernias which occur in and around the navel
- **Incisional** hernias usually occur in and around previous surgical incisions.



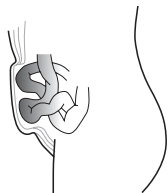
**Inguinal Hernia**



**Femoral Hernia**



**Umbilical Hernia**



**Incisional Hernia**

**Q** What are the symptoms of a hernia?

**A** The symptoms of inguinal hernias may vary. Sometimes there are no symptoms other than the development of a lump that normally should not be there. Other signs may include a burning or gurgling sensation at the bulge, the feeling of weakness or pressure in the groin, and general pain or discomfort at the site. The pain that may accompany the hernia is caused by the pressure that is created when the tissue pushes through the tear or weak spot in the abdominal wall. The more tissue that pushes through, the more pressure and pain present. You may feel more pain when coughing or straining.

**Q** Who gets hernias?

**A** According to the National Center for Health Statistics, approximately 5 million Americans have hernias. While inguinal hernias are more common in men due to a natural abdominal tissue weak spot just above the scrotum, hernias can also occur in women. Femoral hernias, which occur high in the thigh, are more common in women.

Most hernias are congenital (present at birth) or age-related weaknesses in the abdominal wall. They can also occur as a result of stress or strain on the abdominal muscles, for example, by heavy lifting or during pregnancy. Often, they just seem to happen without any apparent cause.

**Q** Is a hernia dangerous?

**A** Some hernias are referred to as **reducible** if the protruding sac can be pushed back in or flattened inside the abdomen. Although you may experience discomfort, this type of hernia is usually not an immediate danger to your health. However, an untreated hernia will never heal on its own. If left untreated, the hernia is likely to increase in size and become more painful with time. Another type of hernia is referred to as a **non-reducible, incarcerated or imprisoned hernia**. In this case, the organ or tissue becomes trapped and its blood supply is compromised. This condition is called strangulation and is usually preceded by a tender lump that will not reduce and is accompanied by rapidly worsening pain and reddening of the overlying skin. This condition can be life-threatening and can potentially require emergency surgery.

**Q** How are hernias treated?

**A** Although you may feel some temporary relief from the pain associated with a hernia by avoiding strenuous activity, the only proven way to eliminate the pain is by surgical repair. The reasons for having a hernia surgically repaired are:

- To prevent a strangulated hernia
- To relieve the pain that is preventing you from participating in your daily routine

As with any operation, there are some risks involved with hernia surgery. Only your doctor can diagnose your condition properly and offer the best treatment options. Hernias are a common occurrence, so don't suffer — see your doctor *today!*

Every year, over 750,000 Americans seek surgical repair for their hernia. Today's modern day hernia repair techniques and hernia mesh products often provide a safe and simple repair option, allowing a speedy recovery.

If you think that you may have a hernia, but are concerned about post-operative pain and the duration of the recovery period after surgery, consult with your doctor. You will learn that there are many treatment options available that offer less post-operative pain and discomfort and will have you back to your normal routine quicker than you may think.

Hernias can be extremely painful, and in some cases, may be debilitating. It is important to have a doctor examine you to determine your options for repair. Your doctor can educate you on the treatment alternatives for your hernia and the risks and benefits of each.

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**Q** How will my hernia be repaired?

**A** Most hernias are repaired using a **tension-free** surgical technique that eliminates the stress on surrounding muscles. This procedure, usually completed in about an hour, is performed under local or general anesthetic on an outpatient basis. The Atrium ProLite™ or ProLoop™ Mesh Plug will be inserted into the hernia defect through a small incision made in the area of the hernia. Once in place, the plug gently expands to conform to the anatomical shape of your hernia defect. A second flat piece of mesh called an “onlay” is secured over the mesh plug to help prevent the hernia from recurrence. Following surgery, surrounding tissue will grow in and around the bio-compatible mesh, creating a stronger and more permanent repair.

**Q** When can I return to normal activity?

**A** Since the tension-free procedure is being performed to repair your hernia, you are not restricted from most normal activity. Patients should “get back to normal” at their own pace.

**Q** Will my hernia return?

**A** Today's tension-free procedure using the Atrium ProLite™ mesh materials help reduce the risk of recurrence. The likelihood of your hernia recurring after this procedure is normally less than two percent.

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## Answering Your Questions About Hernia Repair