

Surgical procedure

Open Incisional Hernia Repair

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

This surgical fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

If your injury or illness is critical or life threatening, call triple zero (000). To speak to a registered nurse, call healthdirect on 1800 022 222.

Notes and questions to bring to your doctor

For more help with what to ask your doctor, visit [healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/question-builder)

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This document will give you information about an open incisional hernia repair. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is an incisional hernia?

Any operation on your abdomen needs a cut that is closed with stitches. Sometimes your wound does not heal properly, resulting in the contents of your abdomen pushing through. This produces a lump called a hernia (see figure 1).



Figure 1
An incisional hernia

A hernia can be dangerous because your intestines or other structures within your abdomen can get trapped and have their blood supply cut off (strangulated hernia).

What are the benefits of surgery?

You should no longer have the hernia. Surgery should prevent serious complications.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

You can sometimes control the hernia with supportive clothing or simply leave it alone. It will not get better without surgery.

What does the operation involve?

Various anaesthetic techniques are possible. The operation usually takes about 90 minutes. Your surgeon will make a cut through your old scar. They will repair the weak tissue either with stitches only or using a synthetic mesh, which they will stitch to the muscles.

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Bleeding
- Unsightly scarring
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- Developing a collection of blood or fluid
- Difficulty passing urine
- Skin necrosis
- Injury to structures that come from your abdomen and are within the hernia
- Injury to nerves
- Removing your umbilicus (belly button)

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after one to four days.

Increase how much you walk around over the first few days.

Your doctor will tell you when you can return to work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

The hernia can come back.

Summary

An incisional hernia is a weakness in your abdominal wall which happens when previous wounds do not heal properly. If left untreated, an incisional hernia can cause serious complications.

Acknowledgements

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