

Having surgery for a hernia in the groin



You're going to have surgery for a hernia in the groin. This health sheet explains:

- What the surgery involves
- How to prepare
- How to take care of yourself after your operation

Why am I being given this sheet?

Normally, the abdominal muscles surround the intestines and other organs and keep them inside the body.

Sometimes these muscles have a defect. Some may be a little bit separated. This "hole" allows the organs inside to pass through. Then they can appear under the skin. They form a hump. This is called a hernia.

There are two types of hernias in the groin area:

- a little above the groin crease:
inguinal hernia
- a little below the groin crease:
femoral hernia

Hernias sometimes cause discomfort. Something feels heavy in that area.

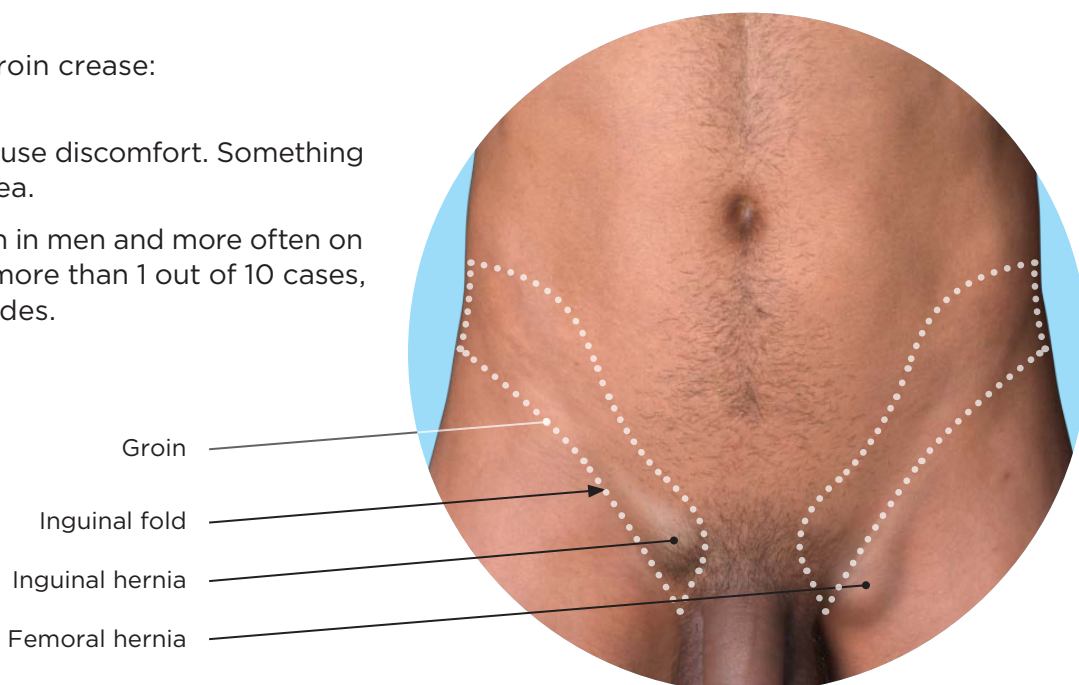
They're more common in men and more often on the right side. But in more than 1 out of 10 cases, they occur on both sides.

How is a hernia treated?

Hernias in the groin are treated with surgery. This is done when they cause discomfort or pain, or when they interfere with physical activities, for example.

Are all hernias operated on?

Depending on your health and other factors, it may be decided to simply follow the hernia. This is done, for example, if it doesn't bother you or cause any discomfort.



In general, even if the hernia isn't operated on, no other more serious problems will appear. But over time, hernias can get bigger. It depends on each patient.

Sometimes regular follow-ups are done to see how the hernia is progressing and if surgery is needed at a given time.



CAUTION

Sometimes you may suddenly feel severe pain at the site of the hernia. You may also have vomiting or nausea.

This can be a sign that the hernia is obstructed. That's to say, the organ that's sticking out through the hole is being pinched. This is called "incarceration" or "strangulation". If you have such symptoms, you should go to the emergency room immediately.

What does the operation involve?

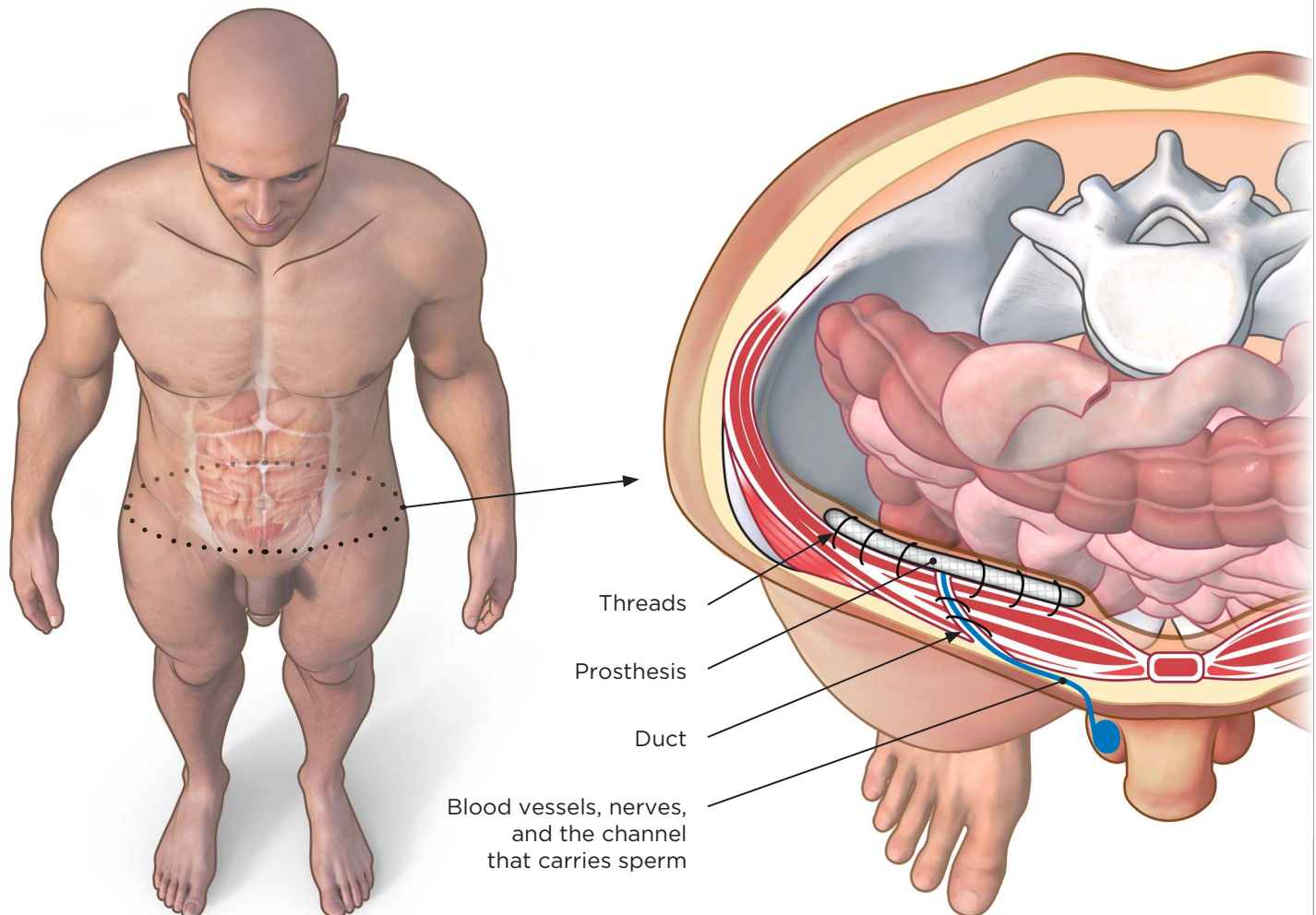
The organs are put back into the abdomen. Then, the muscles are reinforced with a prosthesis. This decreases the risk of the hernia recurring.

The operation can be done by either:

- Making a single large incision at the site of the hernia.
- Making 3 or more small incisions in the abdomen. These are then used to insert instruments to operate from the inside.

You'll see with the doctor which approach is better for your case.

Example of a groin hernia operation



What are the risks associated with the operation?

The main risks are:

- pain that persists over time (chronic)
- injury to the intestines
- infection of the wound
- accumulation of fluid at the hernia site (seroma)
- return of the hernia (recurrence)

The operation can also cause temporary problems:

- difficulty urinating
- severe pain at the site of the scar
- bruising (hematoma)
- sensitive skin along the length of the leg
- pain in the testicles or swelling of the bursa (scrotum)

How should I prepare for the operation?

The following tips will help you avoid complications and heal faster.

- **Quit smoking.**

Smoking increases the risk of infection and of health problems after the operation, especially to the lungs. With smoking, the wound heals less well. This is why:

- It's better to stop smoking and vaping 4 weeks before the operation or cut back as much as possible.
- It's important not to smoke in the 48 hours before the operation.



- **Stop drinking alcohol.**

- Stop 4 weeks before the operation. This reduces the risks of bleeding, having an infection, or having serious heart or lung problems.
- Don't drink alcohol **24 to 48 hours before the operation.** This can change the effect of the pain medications given during the operation.



- **Maintain a healthy weight.**

The hospital will contact you to give you the date of the surgery. You'll also receive other information and other health sheets to help you prepare.

How long should the operation take?

That depends on several factors. Usually, it's a day surgery. This means you're discharged on the same day.

In some cases, the doctor may decide that you'll stay in the hospital for a few more days to be monitored.

What precautions should I take AFTER the operation?

To heal faster, allow time for the repair to become stronger, and prevent the hernia from returning, follow these tips:

- For 1-2 months, or until your follow-up appointment:
 - For men: Wear a support for your genitals if it's been recommended to you. This is a special type of underwear called an athletic support or scrotal support.
 - Avoid lifting, pushing, or pulling objects over 5 kg (10 lbs). That's the weight of two 2.5 liter bottles of soft drink.
 - Don't exercise.



- Avoid being constipated.
To do this:
 - Drink plenty of water unless your care team doesn't allow it.
 - Take a stool softener (laxative), such as Lax-A-Day or another brand.
- Walk as soon as you can. You can go up and down stairs. This will help you to heal faster and maintain your strength and muscle mass.



You can also see the health sheet [Taking care of yourself after hernia surgery](#).

Are there any medications to take?

You'll be given pain medication when you leave the hospital.

What if I need to change or cancel an appointment?

Call the CHUM Appointment Centre, Monday to Friday, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

📞 **514 890-8051** or **1 855 769-5842** (toll-free).

Who can I contact for help or to ask questions?

For any health concern related to your hernia, you can call the CHUM Patient Health Line.



CHUM PATIENT HEALTH LINE

514 890-8086

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

You're a CHUM patient? You have questions about your health status? A nurse can help you.



USEFUL RESOURCES

Other CHUM health fact sheets are available. Ask your care team which fact sheets can help you.



You can also read them online.

chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the advice of your healthcare professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
chumontreal.qc.ca