

Self-care hernia surgery

In the abdomen or groin



You've had surgery for a hernia in your abdomen or groin. This health sheet explains:

- How to take care of yourself
- What you need to pay attention to

Why am I being given this sheet?

This sheet offers tips on how to take care of yourself after your operation. You had surgery to treat a hernia. This means that an organ was partly pushing out from its normal position. Your hernia was in one of the following locations:

- groin (inguinal hernia)
- navel (umbilical hernia)
- under the sternum (epigastric hernia)



Example of a hernia under the sternum

- at the site of an old operation (incisional hernia)
- on the side of the abdomen (lateral ventral hernia)

What should I expect after the operation?

- At the site of your wound(s), you may feel that your skin is:
 - a bit tight
 - more sensitive
 - burning
- You may be in pain. The pain should decrease within a few days.

Don't let the pain go above a level of 4 out of 10 (10 being the worst pain imaginable). The stronger the pain, the harder it is to relieve it.

Pain level



0

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

no pain

worst pain

For good pain control in the first few days, take the painkillers prescribed by your doctor regularly. If they cause constipation, talk with your care team. Afterwards, over-the-counter painkillers (such as Tylenol, Advil) should provide relief.

- In the case of a hernia in the groin, the operation may cause bruising or swelling. In men, it will be at the testicles and the base of the penis. For women, it will be in the pubis area.

This will go away in a few weeks.

- You can apply cold compresses or ice for up to 15 minutes every two hours. Put a cloth between the ice pack and the skin.

What should I pay attention to after the operation?

WOUNDS AND BANDAGES

- If your wounds are closed and not leaking, leave them exposed to the air with no bandage.
- If a little blood is leaking, there's no need to worry. Put a small, clean gauze pad over the wound and secure it with an adhesive bandage. Change the gauze once a day until the bleeding has stopped.
- If you leave the hospital with a bandage or a drain, a nurse will take care of it. A request will be made to your CLSC for this service.

WOUND CLOSURE

Your wounds may be closed in different ways.

- **Staples or stitches.** These will be removed by the CLSC nurse 7 to 10 days after the operation. They may also be removed during your follow-up with your surgeon.

In some cases, the staples are kept in a little longer.

Inguinal hernia closed with staples



- ① 1 week after the operation
- ② 4 years later.

- **Small self-adhesive strips (Steri-Strips).**

These will peel off on their own. If they're not gone after 10 days, remove them yourself very gently.

- **Glue.** This will go away on its own. Don't scratch it.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

You can take a shower if you no longer have a drain and your wound is closed, that is, if there's no open gap between the two edges.

To wash your wounds, let water run over them. Don't aim the stream of water directly at them. To dry them, pat them with a towel without rubbing. Don't put soap or cream on your wounds.

If you have a bandage, you can remove it yourself, as you were shown by the clinical team. If there's still a bit of leaking, you can change the dressing once a day.

If the bandage is covering a drain, it will be changed by a nurse from the CLSC for as long as you need it.

The bandage must be kept dry. Wash yourself with a washcloth or a handheld showerhead if you have one. Be careful not to wet the bandage.

Don't take a bath or go to a swimming pool if your wounds are not yet healed.



EATING

It may take longer than usual to digest your food. Here are some tips if this happens to you:

- Drink a glass of water every hour during the day, unless your health requires that you not drink too many fluids.
- Go for a walk at least once a day.
- Gradually take in more fiber (bran, prune juice, fruits and vegetables, etc.). See the health sheet [*Des moyens pour combattre la constipation.*](#) (French only)

ALCOHOL

Don't drink alcohol if you're taking opioids or antibiotics. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Are there any movements to make or avoid?

- Wear your abdominal binder properly if your doctor has instructed you to wear one. Your doctor will tell you when you can remove it.
- To get out of bed, follow the advice of your care team. See the health sheet [*Me lever et bouger après mon opération*](#) (French only).
- Avoid lifting, pulling, or pushing objects larger than 5 kg (10 lbs). That's the equivalent of two 2.5-liter bottles of soda.
- Avoid making forceful or sudden movements, such as shaking a carpet.
- Avoid pushing heavy objects, such as a lawnmower, a stroller, or furniture.



When will I be able to resume my activities?

- You can resume the following activities right away:
 - walking outside
 - walking up and down stairs
 - doing light housekeeping tasks
- You can drive if you're not taking opioids for pain and are able to move your legs properly.
- You can have sex as soon as you feel ready. See the health sheet [*Les activités sexuelles après une opération*](#) (French only).
- Returning to work and sports must be authorized by your surgeon.



What follow-up will I have?

You'll have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon 4 to 6 weeks after the operation.



What signs should I watch out for?

Call a nurse at the **CHUM Patient Health Line** if you have any of the following signs:

- fever of at least 38°C (100.4°F) for more than 24 hours
- signs of wound infection: redness, swelling, warmth, yellowish or greenish discharge
- pain that gets worse or isn't relieved by medication
- inability to urinate after 8 to 10 hours
- no bowel movements for several days, nausea, and swollen abdomen
- pain or swelling in a leg

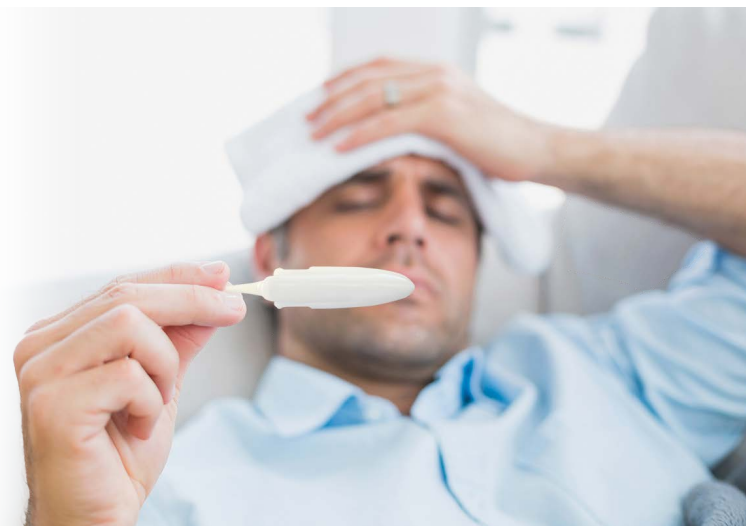


CHUM PATIENT HEALTH LINE

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



Questions

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