

Umbilical Hernia

Definition

- A bulge or swelling in the area of the umbilicus (navel or belly button)

Health Information

Symptoms

- An umbilical hernia is a navel that bulges ('pops out') with crying, straining or coughing
- The bulge may or may not go away when the baby is quiet
- A small round opening (ring) can be felt in the muscles under the hernia
- The hernia is always located right underneath the navel
- Some hernias stay out all the time. Although they can be pushed in, they pop right back out.

Cause

- A defect in the stomach wall that's present at birth and doesn't close
- When pregnant, the umbilical cord's blood vessels go to the mother's placenta. They pass through this opening (ring). Normally, it closes off soon after birth.

Care Advice

1. Overview:

- Umbilical hernias are very common. They occur in 10 - 20% of children.
- They are not painful and they never break.
- They do bulge out more with crying, straining or after eating. Reason: Due to a full stomach. None of these make the hernia last any longer.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

2. Treatment:

- No treatment is needed.
- Do not bother pushing the hernia back in. Reason: It's not needed and can irritate the skin.

3. Avoid:

- Do not put tape, a coin, or "belly band" on the hernia.
- Reason: This does not speed healing. It can lead to a skin rash or infection.

4. Reasons for Surgery to Close the Defect:

- The hernia is very large and causes a cosmetic problem. For example, your child is teased about it.
- The defect is larger than 1 inch (2.5 cm) across. (Reason: The smaller ones often will go on to close on their own.)
- Child reaches age 4 and hernia is still present.
- The hernia becomes stuck and causes pain or vomiting.
- Any hernia that occurs higher up than the navel.

5. What to Expect:

- Most close on their own before age 4 years.

Call Your Doctor If

- Hernia appears to cause crying or pain
- Unexplained vomiting occurs
- Hernia turns red or painful to touch
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

Pediatric Care Advice

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