

Your child's inguinal hernia repair or hydrocele

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If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

Introduction

We expect your child to make a rapid recovery after their operation and to experience no serious problems. However, it is important that you should know about minor problems which are common after this operation and also about more serious problems which can occur occasionally. The section "**What problems can occur after this operation?**" describes these and we would particularly ask you to read this.

What is an inguinal hernia or hydrocele (in boys)?

An inguinal hernia occurs where there is a weakness in the muscle around the groin, resulting in fat or intestine (bowel) bulging through and causing a lump. This type of hernia is very common, particularly in premature babies, and needs surgery to correct it. It can occur on either side of the groin. Sometimes a hernia can occur on both sides.

A hydrocele occurs when this weakness in the muscle does not completely close off. Fluid can then pass down between the abdomen and the scrotum, causing swelling. This is called a hydrocele.

A hydrocele may disappear within the first 2-3 years of life, a hernia does not usually go away.

Why is this operation needed?

The lump that bulges through the weakness usually moves in and out easily, but sometimes can become trapped. This is called strangulation, and can result in problems with the bowel. The aim of this operation is to correct the hernia before any of these complications arise. If your child has a hernia on both sides, they are usually repaired at the same time.

What does it involve?

The procedure is done under a general anaesthetic and requires a small incision around the hernia to allow the surgeon to fix it. They will then close the incision with dissolvable stitches, which means that they don't need to be removed. There will not be a dressing but skin glue will be used to protect the wound.

The procedure takes around an hour and is usually done as a day case, so that you can go home the same day.

What are the alternatives?

There are no alternatives to this operation. You can watch and wait but this will lead to a risk of the hernia becoming strangulated and an emergency operation being required.

What preparations are needed for the operation?

You will receive an appointment for a pre-assessment prior to your child's admission. This is usually done over the phone. They will check your child's health and give you advice about eating and drinking before the operation, and about what to bring with you to the hospital. If your child is very young (under one year old) you should receive special advice regarding breast feeding and formula milk. If you have any questions, then please contact the consultant's secretary.

How will my child feel during the procedure?

Your child will be asleep under a general anaesthetic during the operation and they will not feel any pain. They will also receive some pain killers into their veins along with some anti-sickness medication. The anaesthetist will give your child a local anaesthetic to numb the wound site for a number of hours following surgery to minimise pain. The local anaesthetic will be given either as an injection in the lower spine called a caudal injection or into the area around the hernia.

You should always discuss any concerns about your child's pain with the nurse looking after your child. Should you want more information about the caudal injection mentioned above, please ask for a copy of our leaflet, Paediatric Caudal Analgesia.

How will my child feel afterwards?

After the operation your child may have some discomfort. Pain relief will be prescribed and given as necessary. When your child is at home he should only need paracetamol and ibuprofen, and you should give this to your child regularly, at the recommended dose, for the first 48 hours.

Common problems are listed in the "**What problems can occur after this operation?**" section below.

What happens after the procedure?

Your child will be able to have a drink or milk feed when they return to the ward. The nurse will advise you when this is appropriate. Once your child has recovered from the anaesthetic, has eaten, drunk and passed urine, the nursing staff will discharge your child home.

What problems can occur after this operation?

The repair of an inguinal hernia is usually straightforward, but as with any operation that requires an anaesthetic, there are risks. The surgeon and anaesthetist will explain these risks in detail, but the general surgical risks are outlined below:

- There may be some bruising near where the cut was made and sometimes swelling may occur. This should settle over a few weeks.
- The wound may become infected. If this happens, you should seek advice from your GP and your child will be given antibiotics.
- For boys only, there can be injuries to the spermatic cord (the cord that supplies the testicles with blood) or blood vessels, as these are close to the area of surgery.
- Hernias can return on the same side (around one in 100 cases), or a new hernia could appear on the opposite side (around four or five in 100 cases).

Aftercare

As long as you give him/her paracetamol regularly at the recommended dose (according to the instructions on the packet) for the first 48 hours, the pain should wear off over a couple of days.

Keep the wound dry for two days following the operation. After this you can bath your child as normal.

You must seek medical advice if:

- there is oozing from the wound (a small amount of clear fluid spotting is normal)
- your child has a high temperature that does not come down with paracetamol.

If the problems persist for more than one day, please contact your GP.

Follow up

A routine follow-up is not always necessary. If your surgeon thinks a follow-up appointment is required, you will be informed before you go home and the appointment will be sent through the post. If you would like your child to be followed up, you should either request this before your child goes home, or ask your GP to request a follow-up appointment.

Further information

Day Surgery Unit

7.30am to 9pm, Monday – Friday
Tel: 01271 322 455

Caroline Thorpe Ward

Open 24 hours, 365 days a year
Tel: 01271 322704

Little Journey app

There is also an app you can download on your iPhone or android devices that has a virtual tour of the Day Surgery Unit and gives further information on what to expect on the day. This is available at <https://littlejourney.health/>

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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