

Hernia and/or hydrocele

Discharge instructions

What is the difference between a hernia and a hydrocele?

A hernia occurs when the lining of the abdomen (belly) extends out of the abdominal cavity, making a sac (pocket). The bowel or other organs bulge into the sac. A communicating hydrocele is similar to a hernia except that the sac contains fluid only. Sometimes children have more than one hernia or hydrocele. They can occur in both boys and girls.

Why is surgery needed?

Hernias should be repaired because the intestine can get trapped in the sac and be injured. Many non-communicating hydroceles (ones that do not change in size throughout the day) go away by themselves. If they do not, or if they are communicating with the abdomen, then most will be repaired.

What can I expect after surgery?

Children can usually go home the day of surgery. Your child will have some soreness. Medicine will help control the pain.

There will be a small incision where the hernia or hydrocele was. The incision is held together by stitches under the skin. The stitches will dissolve within a few weeks.

The incision may be covered by a clear bandage, or gauze and tape. To hold the edges of the skin together, Steri-Strips® (small pieces of tape) may be used. They usually fall off within 2 weeks. It is not a problem if they fall off sooner. The incision area may be swollen and bruised for a few days. It is often hard and slightly swollen for a few months after surgery.

How should I care for my child?

If a bandage is on the incision, remove it when the surgeon recommends. The day after surgery, your child may bathe or shower.

What can my child eat?

Your child may prefer clear liquids or a soft diet at first, but should be able to go back to a regular diet within a few days.

How active can my child be?

Healing can take several days. Encourage quiet play or non-strenuous activity initially. Your child should be able to return to normal activity within a week.

What else do I need to know?

See your Patient Discharge Summary sheet for specific instructions about pain medicines and when to see the surgeon again.

When should I call the surgeon?

- any bleeding the day after surgery
- not urinating at least every 8 hours
- pain that is not relieved with the recommended medicine
- vomiting the day after surgery or continued upset stomach
- temperature higher than 102° F
- increasing swelling, redness, or pain at the incision or the area around it
- drainage coming from the incision

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child, but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the surgeon.