

Hernia

FACTS:

- A hernia occurs when an organ (usually intestines) protrudes through a weak point or tear in the thin muscle wall that holds the abdominal organs in place.
- A hernia may become larger when the child coughs, bends, lifts or strains. In infants and small children it may only be seen when the child is crying.
- **Umbilical hernias**, or “belly button hernias,” are caused by the incomplete closure of the muscle surrounding the belly button at birth. It is a soft swelling that protrudes and may enlarge with crying or straining.
- An umbilical hernia usually will close on its own by age five years. It is painless and usually causes no problems.
- In rare cases bowel or blood vessels may protrude. If this is suspected, the child should be seen by a doctor.
- **Inguinal hernias** are caused by the weakness or an opening in the lower abdominal muscles and is felt as a soft bulge in the groin area. They are more common in boys than in girls.
- An inguinal hernia is more serious and can lead to bowel becoming trapped in the hernia. This loss of blood supply to the bowel can sometimes be life-threatening.



Hernias are a very common birth defect.



Many belly button hernias will close on their own.



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TREATMENT:

- Call a doctor right away if the child has a hernia and the contents cannot be pushed back into the abdomen using gentle pressure; the child develops nausea, vomiting or fever with their hernia; or the hernia becomes red, purple, dark, or discolored.
- Taping or strapping a hernia will not make it go away.
- Surgery is the only treatment for an inguinal hernia.



If a hernia becomes red, purple or dark, call a doctor immediately.



Children with hernias are easily chosen for adoption.