



## **Patient Information Sheet: Inguinal Hernia Repair**

### **Introduction**

This patient information sheet is designed to help you understand inguinal hernia repair, including the details of the procedure, its benefits and risks, and what you can expect before and after surgery. If you have any questions, please speak with your healthcare provider, who will be happy to assist you.

### **What is an Inguinal Hernia?**

An inguinal hernia occurs when tissue, such as part of the intestine, protrudes through a weak spot in the abdominal muscles in the groin area. It may appear as a lump, which can cause discomfort, pain, or a dragging sensation, especially when coughing, bending, or lifting heavy objects. The condition can worsen over time and may lead to complications if left untreated, such as bowel obstruction or strangulation.

### **Why is Surgery Needed?**

Surgery is the recommended treatment for inguinal hernias, as they do not heal on their own. The operation is necessary to prevent complications and relieve symptoms. In some cases, your surgeon may suggest delaying surgery if the hernia is small and not causing any symptoms, but for most people, repair is required to restore normal function and alleviate discomfort.

### **What is an Inguinal Hernia Repair?**

Inguinal hernia repair is a common surgical procedure where the surgeon pushes the protruding tissue back into the abdomen and reinforces the weakened muscle area, usually with a synthetic mesh. The repair can be performed either as open surgery or laparoscopically (keyhole surgery).

**Open Surgery:** A single incision is made in the groin to access the hernia. This approach is more suitable for large or complicated hernias.

**Laparoscopic Surgery:** Several small incisions are made, and a camera (laparoscope) and instruments are used to perform the repair. This approach is minimally invasive, offering quicker recovery and less post-operative pain.

Your surgeon will discuss the best approach for your individual case.

### **The Benefits of Surgery**

- Relief from discomfort and pain caused by the hernia.
- Reduced risk of serious complications, such as bowel obstruction or strangulation.
- Improved quality of life and ability to perform daily activities without discomfort.



## What are the Risks?

As with any surgery, inguinal hernia repair carries some risks, including:

- **Infection:** At the incision sites or internally.
- **Bleeding:** Usually minimal but could require further treatment.
- **Chronic pain:** A small percentage of patients may experience long-term pain after surgery.
- **Recurrence:** The hernia may come back in the future, although this is less likely with the use of mesh reinforcement.
- **Damage to nearby structures:** Including nerves, blood vessels, or the bowel, though these complications are rare.

Your surgeon will discuss these risks with you and explain how they are minimized.

## Before Surgery

Your surgeon will provide you with pre-operative instructions. These may include stopping certain medications and fasting for a set period before your operation. It's important to follow these guidelines to ensure a smooth and safe procedure. You should also arrange for someone to take you home after the surgery, as you will not be able to drive.

## What to Expect on the Day of Surgery

On the day of your surgery, you will be admitted to the hospital and asked to change into a gown. A member of the anaesthetic team will review your medical history and discuss the type of anaesthesia you will receive, usually a general anaesthetic. Routine checks, such as blood pressure and heart rate, will be carried out. You will then be taken to the operating theatre where the procedure will be performed. Once the surgery is complete, you will be taken to the recovery area where your condition will be closely monitored.

## After the Operation

- **Pain and discomfort:** Some pain is expected at the site of the surgery, but this can be managed with medication prescribed by your healthcare team.
- **Mobility:** You will be encouraged to start walking as soon as you feel able, usually within a few hours after the operation. This helps to prevent complications such as blood clots.
- **Going home:** Most patients can go home the same day or after an overnight stay. You should arrange for someone to help you for the first 24 hours.
- **Recovery:** You should be able to return to light activities within a few days, but avoid heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for at least four to six weeks. Your surgeon will provide specific guidance depending on your individual case.

## Potential Side Effects

Some patients may experience bruising or swelling in the groin area, which should subside within a few days. There may also be numbness around the incision site, which



usually improves over time. In rare cases, patients can experience persistent pain or other complications, which should be reported to your surgeon.

### **Follow-Up Care**

You will have a follow-up appointment to assess your recovery and ensure the hernia repair is healing properly. Your surgeon will discuss when you can return to work, exercise, and normal daily activities. If you have any concerns during your recovery, such as increasing pain, redness, or swelling around the incision, please contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **Long-Term Outlook**

Most people recover fully from inguinal hernia repair and can return to their usual activities without any further problems. The use of synthetic mesh reduces the likelihood of recurrence, but it's important to follow your post-operative instructions to ensure a smooth recovery.

### **Conclusion**

Inguinal hernia repair is a safe and effective procedure for treating hernias. By undergoing surgery, you can prevent complications, relieve symptoms, and improve your quality of life. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact your healthcare team.