

GROIN HERNIA REPAIR USING A MESH

POST OPERATIVE INFORMATION SHEET

Your operation

The modern mesh technique of repairing a groin hernia involves removing or stitching back the hernia bulge and then reinforcing the area that has become weak and allowed the hernia bulge to form, with a polypropylene (plastic) mesh. This is sutured or stapled in place and is permanent. Scar tissue forms on the mesh and this process reinforces the area. A mesh repair does not stitch tissues together under tension. This is in contrast to the older repairs. Because there is no tension placed on the tissues recovery from a mesh repair is faster, less painful and activity is only limited by what you feel you can achieve without pain. There is no compulsory period in which you should refrain from normal activities or exercise although it is normal to expect to be limited in this respect for 10 to 14 days. This is the same for both keyhole (laparoscopic) and open (single groin incision) methods of repairing a groin hernia. Mesh hernia repair usually requires a single dose of antibiotic which is administered during surgery. There is no need to continue these when you go home.

Immediately After your Operation

You will have a certain amount of pain and discomfort when moving about. You will be given painkillers on discharge which you are to take regularly as prescribed. If you are going home on the day of the surgery take the first dose as soon as you get home before any local anaesthetic used during the surgery to relieve pain, wears off. After this take them regularly for the first three days whether you feel you need them or not and thereafter as you need them.

You may feel tired for a few days; this is normal but will vary in each individual. Just take it easy until you feel better. When you laugh, sneeze or cough, put a hand on the wound to support it.

You will have a dressing on the wound. There may be a small amount of blood on this when you leave the Hospital. This is normal. If you have a clear dressing, you may take a short shower or warm bath after 24 hours. You may need help. If you have a white dressing, you may remove this after 48 hours together with any paper strips (steristrips) placed across the wound under the dressing and then shower or bath.

The wound is stitched just below the skin edge where the stitches can not be seen. They can however cause lumpiness under the wound which is normal. This will gradually disappear over a period of three months.

The day after your Operation

Eat and drink normally. Try to take short hourly walks indoors as you feel able and walking as upright as possible will aid your recovery. It is worth noting that when getting up in the morning the muscles around the wound will feel stiff and sore, but this will wear off as you get going.

The following days

Gradually build up your activity around the house. Go outside when you feel ready. This is usually 3-5 days after your operation. When you sit down use an upright chair as this is easier to get in and out of than a low soft one.

Constipation can occur following the operation and can be avoided by taking regular fluids. If you do not have your bowels open by the second day take a mild laxative eg Milpar or Senokot from the Chemist. The ward nurses will not allow you home until you have passed water, however if in the days after your operation you find that this becomes difficult or you become unable to pass water please consult your GP.

A small amount of swelling around the wound is normal and bruising is relatively common. In men this can spread to the scrotum or shaft of the penis and in women to the mouth of the vagina. This will gradually settle down in 2-3 weeks.

If you wish to drive, at about ten days to two weeks after your operation sit in the car and do an emergency stop without turning on the engine. If this is uncomfortable do not drive but try again in a couple of days. Do not drive until you can carry out this manoeuvre comfortably, and then start with short local journeys out of busy times.

Light sports such as swimming, cycling or jogging can be resumed when you feel comfortable to do so. Activities involving sudden pulling across the wound such as strenuous sport, heavy digging, lifting heavy objects, pushing lawn mowers and riding a motorbike will be uncomfortable for two to three weeks but you can resume these as soon as it does not cause pain. A general rule of thumb is that if an activity causes pain in the wound you should stop. Patients who have had other types of (stitched or sutured) hernia repair are advised that no heavy lifting or work should be undertaken for six weeks, this does not apply to patients who have had a mesh repair. You may start heavy work when you feel it is comfortable to do so.

Similarly you may resume sexual activities and return to work as soon as you feel comfortable to do so. If there is any concern, please talk to your GP or consultant.

You should seek advice if you have:

Persistent bleeding from the wound

Persistent discharge of yellow fluid or pus from the dressing especially after the first three days

A reddened, swollen area around the wound or dressing with increasing pain or a fever

Who to contact for advice

New Victoria Hospital: Ring 020 8949 9000 and ask to speak to the Clinical Services Manager or if it is after 5.00pm ask for the Sister in Charge. For an out patient appointment please ask for out patients.

Parkside Hospital: Ring 020 8971 8000 and speak to the sister on the ward you were a patient or if it is after 5.00pm ask for the Sister in Charge. For an out patient appointment please ask for out patients.

Kingston Hospital Day Surgery: Ring 020 8546 7711 and ask for the day surgery unit and then to speak to a nurse. If you need an out patient appointment please ring my NHS secretary on 020 8934 2734.