



# Umbilical Hernia

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## What is an Umbilical Hernia –

An umbilical hernia is a bulge or protrusion that is seen or felt in the area of the belly button. This bulge is the result of a failure of the abdominal wall to completely close during development, leaving an opening for a portion of the intestine and fluid to come through. Umbilical hernias are present at birth but may become more noticeable during times when your child is bearing down, crying, coughing, or straining to have a bowel movement. The bulge may seem to disappear when the child is quiet or resting. Umbilical hernias do not usually cause pain.

Most umbilical hernia (about 90 percent) close on their own by the time the child is 4-5 years old. Therefore, your surgeon may recommend waiting until your child is 4-5 years old before undergoing a surgical repair. Waiting has benefits even if the hernia does not close on its own. The hernia generally gets smaller, which simplifies the repair procedure. Waiting also allows the muscle wall to thicken and mature, which makes the repair more robust.

In some case, such as a large hernia or incarceration, surgical repair may be recommended prior to 4-5 years of age. Incarceration of the hernia occurs when the intestine gets trapped in the defect and is unable to go back into the abdomen. An incarcerated hernia will often cause a painful, firm, discolored bulge. If your child has signs of an incarcerated hernia, he or she should be brought to the Emergency Department for immediate evaluation by a medical professional to prevent any damage to the intestines.

It is estimated that umbilical hernias occur in 10-15 percent of all infants, with boys and girls affected equally. African Americans, low birth weight and premature infants are at a greater risk of having an umbilical hernia. How the umbilical cord is clamped or cut after birth has no effect on whether an umbilical hernia will develop or not develop.

## Treatment –

If your child's umbilical hernia does not close on its own by the time he or she is 4-5 years old, we will recommend a surgical procedure to repair the hernia.

## Surgical Repair –

The surgery to repair an umbilical hernia is a day surgery, meaning your child will go home the same day as the procedure. The procedure will be done under general anesthesia.

A small curved incision (resembling a smile) will be made under your child's belly button. The opening will be closed, usually with absorbable sutures, and the overlying skin will be closed with a combination of absorbable stitches below the skin and Dermabond. If Dermabond is not used, your child may have a dressing over the site, which should be removed 48 hours after surgery.

Dermabond is a sterile, liquid adhesive that will hold the edges of your child's wound together and act as a waterproof dressing. It usually stays in place for **5-10 days** before it starts to fall off. You should not pick, peel or rub the Dermabond, as this could cause your child's incision to open before it is healed.

The incision site should not be submerged under water (or swimming) for **10 days**. Do not apply any ointments such as Vaseline or Neosporin to the incision while Dermabond is in place.

*Disclaimer: This information is not intended to substitute or replace the professional medical advice you receive from your physician.*