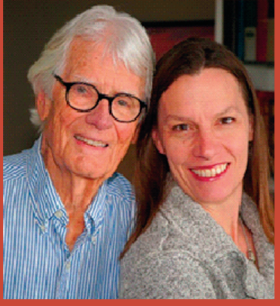


HEALTH CORNER



Hernias Are An Age Old Problem

By Diana Gifford

Hernias are an ancient ailment. And modern medicine still debates the best ways to repair or live with them. One of the earliest references appears in the Ebers Papyrus, an Egyptian medical scroll from around 1550 BCE. The treatment for hernias was to push them back into place, in techniques described by Hippocrates. Galen, a Greek physician to gladiators and Roman emperors, had a preference for treating “surgical conditions by means other than the knife.” One can only imagine.

An enduring piece of hernia lore is the truss. A truss was essentially a belt with a pad designed to apply pressure to the protrusion. Trusses were made of leather, metal, or fabric. Some people wore them for decades. Apparently Benjamin Franklin, suffering from a hernia, customized the design of his own truss for improved comfort. Look no further than to Medieval Europe to find the most absurd so-called cures. Some believed that passing through a split tree trunk – literally crawling through it – could cure a hernia. The tree would then be bound shut, as though healing the patient by analogy. Odd times.

Early hernia surgery was crude, painful, and often fatal. Before the late 19th century, the combination of infection, lack of anesthesia, and poor anatomical knowledge made abdominal operations deeply dangerous.

The turning point came with Eduardo Bassini, an Italian surgeon who, in the 1880s, meticulously studied the groin’s anatomy and introduced a systematic way to reconstruct it. His technique, though modified many times since, is widely regarded as the first reliable hernia repair.

The 20th century brought the introduction of surgical mesh. Using mesh allowed surgeons to reinforce weakened tissue and reduce recurrence rates. It was heralded as a breakthrough, though in recent decades it has also sparked debate and litigation. Mesh can be enormously effective, but as with many medical advances, its success is not guaranteed.

Today, many people delay treatment out of fear, embarrassment, or the hope that the problem might resolve itself. They can result from lifting, chronic coughing, pregnancy, or even genetic predisposition. They are democratic: they affect the young, old, athletic, sedentary, cautious, and risk-takers alike.

In the internet era, the ancient impulse to treat hernias at home has been revived by self-proclaimed experts posting videos of DIY abdominal wraps, self-reduction tutorials, and miracle cures. Some echo centuries-old remedies – compresses, belts, or herbal treatments. Others are newly imagined, drawing on the vast creativity of people in online forums.

The fact is, hernias can occur in many different parts of the body, from a variety of causes, and with a wide range of implications, sometimes inconsequential and sometimes fatal. So go and see a doctor to determine the best treatment for you.

Readers often write requesting information about what the take of Dr. W. Gifford-Jones was on one medical issue or another. He had a much appreciated “no nonsense” philosophy. From reading his column for years and years, he was known and trusted. Well, you can still find what he had to say on topics like hernias. Go to www.docgiff.com and type the keywords of interest into the search engine (a little magnifying glass icon in the top right of the page). For example, type “hernia” and you’ll get access to columns on “how to decrease the risk of large bowel hernias”, “if it’s partly broken, should you fix it?”, and advice to “think twice about hernia surgery”.

Columns since around the year 2000 are posted. I’m posting more and more of the older archive of columns too. Among them, some gems!

This column offers opinions on health and wellness, not personal medical advice. Visit www.docgiff.com to learn more. For comments, diana@docgiff.com. Follow on Instagram [@diana_gifford_jones](https://www.instagram.com/diana_gifford_jones)



Ajax Pickering Hospital Foundation

AJAX - The Ajax/Pickering Hospital Foundation hosted a very special event. Organizers claimed that It's always a pleasure to welcome Warren from HTM Insurance Company to the Ajax Pickering Hospital.

And what a wonderful holiday tradition the company has: donating to the hospitals in the all the communities that they serve. HTM Insurance Company was formed in 1898 in the spirit of neighbors helping neighbours, which still is its the inspiration today.

Last thursday, the rain didn't deter the smiles when we hosted Friends Indeed Canada at Lakeridge Gardens to celebrate their \$250,000 five-year pledge to Lakeridge Health's Healthy Aging Program.

Friends Indeed Canada and their supporters - including @iqbalfoods (Ajax) and @picmasjidusman - know how important it is for individuals and families to always feel like a valid part of the community, no matter which stage of life you are in.

In recognition of their generous support, we unveiled two plaqued benches in front of Lakeridge Gardens Long-Term Care Home. These seats are lovingly used by residents, friends and family throughout the year, as both places to gather together and as places to find a moment of peace.



Earlier this month, the staff and trainers at the Central East Prehospital Care Program aka Base Hospital (located at the Jerry Coughlan Health & Wellness Centre) welcomed Mayor Kevin Ashe and members of council from the City of Pickering , as well as Fire Chief Steve Boyd and Deputy Fire Chief Jason Yoshida.

An inside look at life saving scenarios and to try out some of the equipment as well as becoming more aware of the strenuousness of providing CPR that our paramedics and firefighters (unfortunately) face on a regular basis.



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