

Keywords used: different types of hernias

Problem: Though common, hernias are rarely life-threatening. However, they can lead to many issues and annoyances. PCPs should know how to recognize the different types of hernias.

Solution: This article aims to provide clinicians with the following:

1. An overview of the common types of hernias
2. Tips for how to recognize symptoms of hernias
3. Next steps for patients presenting with hernia symptoms

How to Treat Different Types of Hernias

Questions flood a man's mind when he sees a protrusion near his genitals. Fear arises when a mother notices a bulge at her baby's navel. Dread mounts when a woman observes a lump near her hysterectomy incision. Bulge, protrusion and lump are words often used to describe hernias. Though hernias are not typically life-threatening, it is natural for people to think the worst.

In the United States, surgeons perform over a million hernia repairs annually. Hernias, one of the most common surgeries, cost approximately \$20 million each year. Physicians can alleviate fear and dread with prompt recognition and intervention. Keep reading to learn how to recognize and respond to different types of hernias.

Key Takeaways

- Noticing a lump on the abdomen or near the genitals can cause concern. Patient education and intervention are essential to alleviate unnecessary anxiety.
- Inguinal hernias account for 75% of all hernias and commonly occur in the male population.
- Umbilical hernias produce anxiety for new mothers. However, these often painless bulges typically resolve naturally by age four.
- Hernias are generally not dangerous. However, strangulation can cause tissue death and is life-threatening.
- Open and laparoscopic hernia repair are surgical interventions utilized to correct hernias.

Hernia symptoms

Hernia is a generic term referring to a protrusion at a gap in the abdominal wall. These bulges can be painful, especially when coughing or straining. However, some hernias are asymptomatic, and the bulge is the only symptom.

With intervention, hernias are not typically dangerous. However, **strangulation is a life-threatening complication** of hernias, which can cause tissue death. Indicators of possible hernia strangulation are the following:

- Unable to push the hernia back through the abdominal wall
- Sudden pain that quickly intensifies
- A red, purple or darkened bulge
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever

Regardless of type or location, hernias are often disconcerting for patients. Clinicians must recognize the different types of hernias, address patient concerns, and direct them to the appropriate treatment.

Inguinal hernias

Inguinal hernias develop at the inner groin and **account for 75% of hernias**. The intestine pokes through one of the two inguinal canals, the location of the spermatic cord in men. They are near the pubic bone and become more pronounced when standing or coughing.

Men are more likely to experience this type of hernia. In fact, 27% of men will have an inguinal hernia at some point in life. Physicians typically recommend surgical intervention for painful or enlarging hernias.

Umbilical hernias

Umbilical hernias occur at a weak point in the abdominal wall near the navel. This type is most common in babies and obese individuals. Though often painless, they can be frightening for new moms. Umbilical hernias **typically close naturally within the first four years of life**. However, umbilical hernias in adults often require surgical repair.

Incisional hernias

Abdominal surgeries cause a weak spot in the abdominal wall, making patients susceptible to an incisional hernia. Incisional hernias are a common **surgical complication, especially in laparoscopic surgeries**. Experienced surgeons can reduce the risk of incisional hernia with two techniques:

1. Slow-absorbing monofilament sutures
2. No less than a 4:1 suture-to-wound length ratio

These key preventive measures reduce tissue trauma, prevent infection, and optimize postoperative care.

Epigastric hernias

Epigastric hernias appear between the breastbone and navel and are commonly asymptomatic. Consequently, these hernias often go undetected. The **elevated risk of enlargement, pain and complications mandates surgery for epigastric hernias**. Even children and infants require surgical intervention.

Hiatal hernias

When the stomach protrudes through the diaphragm, a hiatal hernia results. These protrusions can be small and often go undetected. However, a large hiatal hernia can cause acid reflux. Surgery may not be necessary. **Lifestyle changes and medications typically relieve symptoms**.

Femoral hernias

In a femoral hernia, abdominal contents protrude through the femoral canal. This hernia can be noticed in the upper thigh but below the inguinal ligament. They are more prevalent in women. Femoral hernias are rare, accounting for less than 3% of hernias. However, strangulation is more common in this type. Therefore, **femoral hernias require emergency surgery**.

Treating different types of hernias

Open and laparoscopic hernia repair are the two surgical methods for correcting the different types of hernias. Differing opinions regarding optimal techniques continue to exist. However, all clinicians agree that **laparoscopic hernia repair requires a surgeon who specializes in minimally invasive techniques**. If one is not available, open hernia repair is preferred.

Open hernia repair

Open hernia repair has been the preferred surgical method for several decades. Depending on whether surgeons use synthetic reinforcement, these surgeries are classified as open mesh (Lichtenstein) or open non-mesh (Shouldice).

Most surgeons prefer the Lichtenstein method because it is easier. Additionally, **hernia recurrence rates are meager** with this type. However, chronic groin pain is a valid concern since 10% of inguinal hernia patients report the problem.

Laparoscopic hernia repair

Laparoscopic hernia repair is growing in popularity due to its positive results. Minimally invasive surgeries boast the following benefits:

- Less pain
- Reduced scarring
- Shorter recovery time
- Improved patient satisfaction

Total extraperitoneal repair (TEP) is the most frequently used laparoscopic hernia repair method. When performed by a skilled surgeon, this technique **reduces the risk of intra-abdominal injury and improves patient outcomes.**

Alleviating concerns related to different types of hernias

Hernias are bothersome protrusions that cause pain, anxiety and embarrassment. Without surgical intervention, they can lead to strangulation. Your patients need access to experienced surgeons who can alleviate these concerns.

<Facility Name> **invests in innovative technology your patients want and need.** Our staff has the expertise to perform the different types of hernia repair. We strive to ensure that each patient receives superior surgical care. We are here to be your partner in care. So, click the "Refer" button to get started.

Resources

"Hernias: Overview." NIH: National Library of Medicine, 2023, Hernias: Overview - InformedHealth.org - NCBI Bookshelf.

"Incisional Hernia." NIH: National Library of Medicine, 2023, Incisional Hernia - StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf.

"Femoral Hernia." NIH: National Library of Medicine, 2023, Femoral Hernia - StatPearls - NCBI Bookshelf.

"Open versus laparoscopic repair of inguinal hernia: an overview of systematic reviews of randomised controlled trials." NIH: National Library of Medicine, 2022, Open versus laparoscopic repair of inguinal hernia: an overview of systematic reviews of randomised controlled trials - PMC.