

Groin Hernia

What is a groin hernia?

When you have a hernia, part of the intestine (bowel) bulges through a weak area or gap in the muscles in the wall of your belly.

A groin hernia is a hernia in the lower part of your belly, where your legs join the lower part of your body. Another name for groin hernia is inguinal hernia because the bowel bulges into the inguinal canal, a space between layers of muscle in your groin.

What is the cause?

A hernia may be caused by anything that causes the intestines to push against a weak area in your belly muscles. Some people are born with a weakness in these muscles. A groin hernia can happen to anyone, but it is much more common in men than women. It can happen when you:

- Lift heavy objects
- Cough or sneeze a lot
- Push too hard when you have a bowel movement
- Are overweight
- Are pregnant

Men with an enlarged prostate can sometimes get a hernia from pushing too hard to urinate.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- Pain or discomfort in the lower belly or groin, especially with physical activity
- A lump in the groin that appears when you lift something or exert yourself
- A lump in the groin that you can push back in

If you have a lump in the groin that cannot be pushed back, it can mean that part of your intestine is trapped between the gap in the muscles and you need to get medical care right away. A groin hernia can become a serious problem if your intestines get trapped. Then blood cannot get to that part of your intestines and part of the intestines may die. This can make you very sick. If this happens, you need surgery right away.

How is it diagnosed?

Your healthcare provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. Tests may include:

- Blood tests
- X-rays

- CT scan, which uses X-rays and a computer to show detailed pictures of the organs inside the belly
- An ultrasound, which uses sound waves to show pictures of the organs inside the lower belly

How is it treated?

Surgery to repair the opening in the muscle wall is the main treatment for a groin hernia. Your healthcare provider will close the weak spot. Your provider may sew a piece of mesh over the weak spot and under the skin to make the area stronger.

The hernia will not get better on its own without treatment, but it also may not get worse for months or even years. If your hernia is not causing problems, you may choose not to have surgery. You may need to use a groin support. Ask your healthcare provider what is recommended for you.

How can I take care of myself?

- Make sure that you know symptoms to watch for that might mean the hernia has trapped your intestines. This is a medical emergency and you would need surgery right away.
- Follow safe practices when you move heavy things. Learn how to lift and move heavy items safely. Remember to use your legs. Bend at your knees, not at your waist. Ask your healthcare provider how many pounds you can safely lift.
- Ask your provider if you need to wear a groin support.
- Try to keep a healthy weight. If you are overweight, lose weight.
- Avoid constipation by eating foods that are high in fiber, using stool softeners, or drinking a natural stimulant beverage, like prune juice. Drink plenty of water. Use laxatives or enemas only if recommended by your provider.
- If you smoke, try to quit. Smoking may cause coughing, which puts extra pressure on the belly and groin muscles. It's also important to stop smoking if you need surgery. Stopping 6 weeks or more before surgery can lower your chances of complications from surgery, such as pneumonia. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit smoking.
- Take medicine as needed to reduce sneezing and coughing from allergies.

Follow the full course of treatment prescribed by your healthcare provider. Ask your provider:

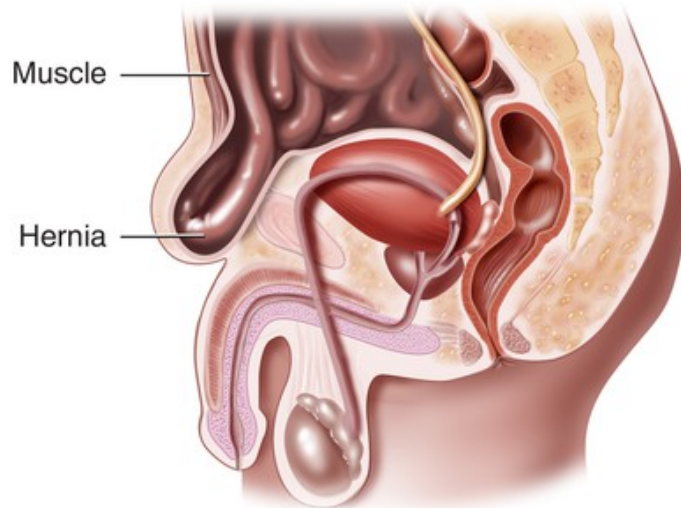
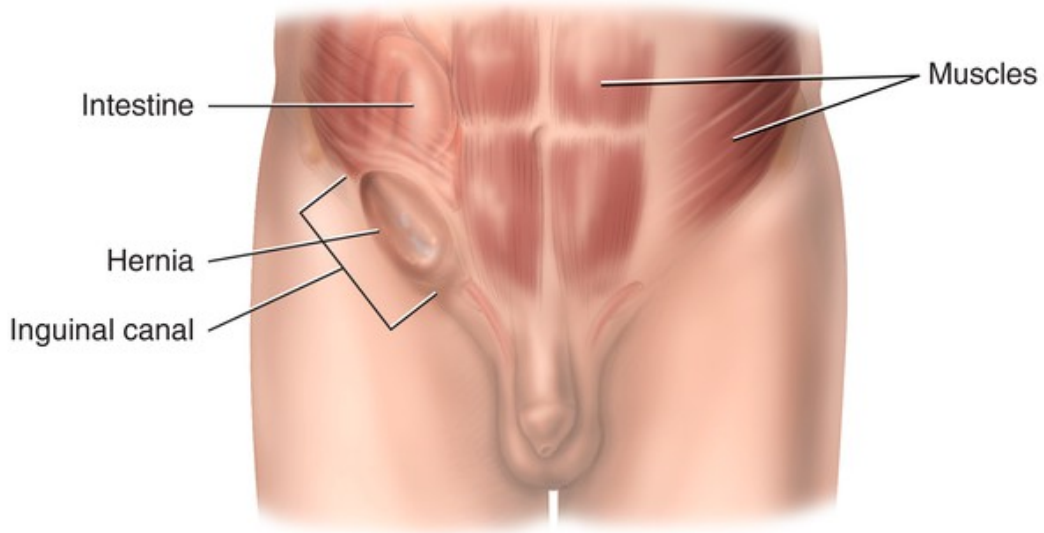
- How and when you will hear your test results
- How long it will take to recover
- What activities you should avoid and when you can return to your normal activities
- How to take care of yourself at home
- What symptoms or problems you should watch for and what to do if you have them

Make sure you know when you should come back for a checkup.

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