



# Could it be a hernia?

## What you need to know about prevention and repair

Hernias are more common than you probably think and many people don't know they have one. About 5 percent of the population is estimated to have a hernia at some point in their lives. A hernia is a hole in the muscle wall of the abdomen that can affect anyone at any age – men, and women, too.

### 8 Silent Signs

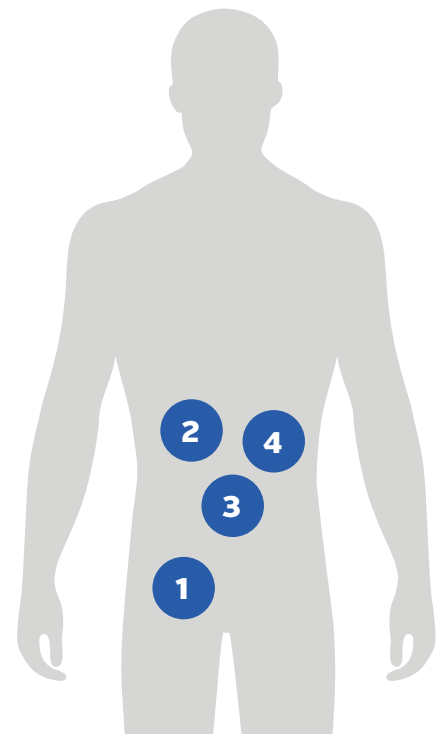
The signs of a hernia are not always obvious. While the most common symptom is a bulge, that isn't always the case. Here are some surprising signs that are easy to miss:

- Heartburn
- Pain in the pelvic area
- Nausea and vomiting
- Fever
- Constipation
- Weakness and muscle fatigue in the upper leg or groin
- Feeling full and bloated
- Pain when lifting or coughing

## Understanding hernia types

There are several kinds of hernias, but they all happen when pressure pushes an organ through a weak spot in the muscle wall. The most common include:

- 1 Inguinal hernia** – this is the most common type, occurring when the intestines push through a weakened spot or tear in the abdominal wall near the groin. This is more common in men than women.
- 2 Hiatal hernia** – occurs when part of your stomach pushes through your diaphragm into your chest. This occurs mostly in people who are over 50 and is caused by pressure on the muscles in our stomach, such as coughing, vomiting, straining or lifting heavy objects. Risk factors include obesity, aging, and smoking.
- 3 Umbilical hernia** – occurs when intestines bulge through the abdominal wall near the belly button. This often occurs in babies under 6 months old and usually goes away over time. They may also occur in adults who are overweight or women who've been pregnant many times.
- 4 Incisional hernia** – occurs after you've had abdominal surgery. The intestines may push through the incision scar or surrounding weakened tissue.



### Not just for men

Women should pay special attention to pain in the pelvic area. Many times hernias are mistaken for fibroids, ovarian cysts or endometriosis. Ask your doctor about the possibility of a hernia if you are experiencing pelvic pain.

## How to prevent a hernia

### **Not all hernias are preventable, but following these tips may help:**

- Maintain ideal body weight by eating a healthy diet and exercising.
- Eat enough fruits, vegetables and whole grains to avoid constipation.
- Use correct form when lifting heavy objects by bending your knees rather than bending forward. Avoid lifting anything that is beyond your ability.
- See a doctor if you're coughing or sneezing persistently.
- Put down the cigs – it can lead to coughing that may trigger a hernia.

## What should you do if you think it's a hernia?

Unfortunately, a hernia won't heal on its own. They don't get smaller and almost always require surgery. In fact, hernias tend to get bigger over time as your muscles weaken, so having the surgery now may prevent serious complications down the road. For example, some hernias become strangulated; meaning the blood supply to the herniated tissue has become cut off. A strangulated hernia is considered a medical emergency.

The good news is that today's hernia surgery has come a long way. Our experienced hernia surgeons offer a variety of repair options, including less invasive procedures with quick recovery times. With less invasive procedures, you will likely go home the same day and feel better a few days after surgery. Most people can resume work in two to three days.

If you think you may have a hernia, discuss your options with your primary care doctor or one of our hernia surgeons.



**To schedule an appointment, call  
904.202.2019**

