



**University of North Carolina Wilmington
Abrons Student Health Center**

INSTRUCTION SHEET: HERNIA (INGUINAL)

The Student Health Provider has diagnosed an inguinal hernia.

A hernia is a weak place in the muscle and other tissue on the outside wall of the abdomen. An increase in pressure inside the abdomen can push parts inside the abdomen through the weak area and outside the abdomen.

An inguinal hernia occurs in the groin. The weak area is often present at birth, but many years may pass before a hernia “ruptures” (a hernia is commonly called a rupture).

A hernia is sometimes brought on by lifting or moving a heavy object. Coughing and being overweight are other factors which can contribute to a hernia.

An inguinal hernia causes a bulge and pain/discomfort in the groin or scrotum. The hernia is not a serious emergency unless the hernia becomes incarcerated. An incarcerated hernia occurs when a piece of intestine is pushed out through the weak area. The blood supply to the intestine can get cut off, and the piece of intestine starts to die. Rupture of the intestine into the abdomen can occur: Like a ruptured appendix, this is a very serious problem.

Symptoms of an incarcerated hernia include severe pain, nausea, and vomiting.

The treatment of a hernia is surgical repair of the weak area. Repair of a hernia should be done soon, but not on an emergency basis (unless incarcerated). Surgery should be scheduled promptly to avoid the infrequent but disastrous complication of an incarcerated hernia.

Surgery for a hernia can usually be done with local or spinal anesthesia, which is safer than general (put-to-sleep) anesthesia. Often, the surgery can be done on an outpatient basis; even if a hospital stay is necessary, the in-hospital time is typically only one or two days.

MEASURES YOU SHOULD TAKE TO HELP TREAT YOUR HERNIA:

1. Avoid straining to lift or move heavy objects.
2. Over-the-counter pain medications can relieve discomfort associated with an inguinal hernia. Acetaminophen (Tylenol), ibuprofen, or naproxen can be taken, depending on individual preference.
3. Call as soon as possible for a follow-up appointment with your personal/referral surgeon. Tell the office you are referred from the Student Health Center for treatment of an inguinal hernia; you should be able to obtain a work-in appointment within 1 to 2 days of your the Student Health Center visit.
4. If you develop symptoms of an incarcerated hernia, go immediately to the nearest emergency department. Specifically, seek care if you develop increased/significant pain in the groin or abdomen, accompanied by lack of appetite, nausea, and vomiting.
5. General measures to improve your overall health can help prevent the recurrence of a hernia. Specifically, maintain a good body weight, stop smoking, engage in moderate exercise, and eat more fiber.