



Umbilical Hernia

What is an umbilical hernia?

A hernia is when there is an opening in the muscle wall and some of the intestines bulge through the muscle opening. In an umbilical hernia the navel area (belly button) is where the muscle opening is. The navel will bulge with crying or straining. The bulge may disappear when your baby is quiet. If you feel the area with your finger, you will feel a small round opening in the muscles of the abdominal wall. The hernia passes through this ring.

Umbilical hernias are very common. Crying does not make them any bigger or last any longer. They are not painful and they never break. The opening in the muscles usually closes on its own by school age. Half of the persistent hernias close by adolescence.

How is it treated?

In most children, an umbilical hernia will go away by itself, but it is important to have your healthcare provider examine your child because in some cases the hernia must be fixed by having an operation. Your child will probably need surgery if:

- The opening is 2 cm (about 3/4 of an inch) or larger.
- The intestines or other abdominal contents become stuck and the big belly button can't be pushed back in. If this happens, your child may also be in pain and he or she should be taken to the doctor as soon as possible.
- The patient is 3 years old or older and the hernia persists.

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