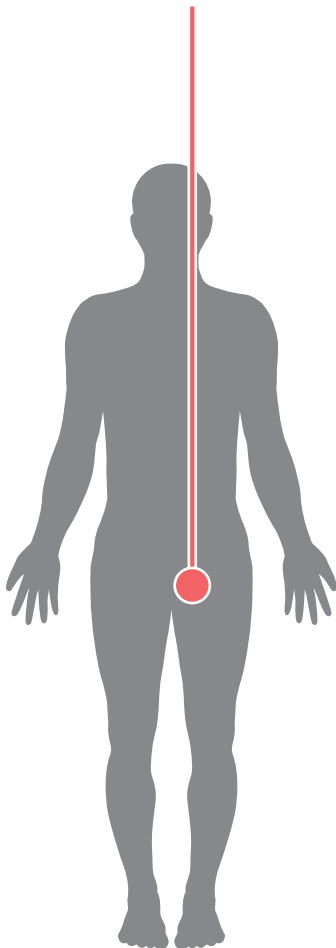


Get Well Soon

Helping you to make a speedy recovery after a groin hernia repair

Groin hernia repair



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This leaflet is a guide to recovering from, or is about to undergo, surgery to have their groin hernia repaired. It does not provide specific medical advice or diagnosis, nor does it give advice about whether you should consent to an operation. All of these matters depend on individual medical advice from your consultant surgeon based on your own health, medical condition and personal circumstances.

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Who this leaflet is for

Print instructions:

To print this document click once on the print icon in your Acrobat Browser, or go to File, then Print on the drop down menu.

To print only one page, select the page number you want in your print menu, usually under 'options' or 'preferences' depending on the printer type.

To save ink, select the 'draft' option.

This leaflet is for anyone who is recovering from, or is about to undergo, surgery to have their groin hernia repaired. The technical term for your operation is an inguinal hernia repair, which is how your surgeon and other health professionals who are helping you may refer to it.

This leaflet should be read in conjunction with any other information you have already been given about your procedure.

The following information is designed to help you make decisions about your recovery. Your surgeon, general practitioner (GP) and other healthcare professionals will offer you a lot of very good advice – but ultimately it's you that has to make the decisions.

Most patients who have this operation will be in and out of hospital on the same day. The advice in this leaflet offers broad guidelines for people who do not have any complications with their surgery or other specific medical circumstances, such as a long-term condition.

Obviously, every individual has different needs and recovers in different ways – so not all the advice in this leaflet will be suitable for everybody. When you're weighing up how to make the decision that's right for you, talk to your surgeon, your GP, your Occupational Health service at work, or your hernia nurse specialist, if you have one. They will all help you to make the right choices for a safe and speedy recovery.

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What to expect after the operation

Scar and stitches

You'll have a scar line in your groin approximately 8–10 cm long. This will be closed using dissolvable stitches (sutures), so they will not need to be removed. The scar line is usually covered with a waterproof dressing and so you can shower the next day.

Dressings

It is wise to keep the scar covered, clean and dry for the first 14 days. Before leaving the ward, make sure you have additional waterproof dressings to take home. Take care when changing the dressings. Do not try to cleanse the wound, just remove the old dressing and replace it immediately with the new one.

Modern day dressings are fairly robust and do not need to be changed every day. The first dressing change will be after 48 hours. The new dressing can be left in place for up to 7 days before you need to change it again. Covering your scar for 14 days will ensure the wound has healed completely. If you are in any doubt about wound healing after this time, see your GP or practice nurse for advice.

Mobility

Many patients have concerns that standing up straight will pull at the stitches. Don't worry about this. Getting out of bed and standing up straight will actually help you to recover more quickly. The secret to a quick recovery is to keep moving. The first morning you may find your groin a little uncomfortable when you get out of bed, but this will get easier.

Discomfort

You will experience pain and discomfort around the scars, especially for the first few days. Extensive bruising and some swelling is also quite common, but usually settles after a couple of weeks. This is perfectly normal, but everyone is different and will experience varying degrees of discomfort. Taking your pain relief tablets regularly for the first 3 days, as instructed, should help you to mobilise. After day 3, the pain will taper off. When you are discharged from hospital, ask the nurse to explain how and when to take your tablets if you are unsure.

If you need to cough or sneeze, place your hand over the scar and support it. This will help to ease any discomfort.

Wound healing

Wound infection is a potential complication of all surgery; follow the guidelines for wound care carefully to reduce this risk.

Signs of infection can be subtle. The first sign will be an increase in pain, and the wound will look either pink or red and feel warm or hot to touch. If this happens, you will need to see your GP as soon as possible for treatment. Usually a course of antibiotics will clear the infection very quickly.

Pain relief

Many people do not need pain relief after day 3. However, if you do, painkillers may cause constipation, so it's important to get plenty of fibre in your diet. Fresh fruit and vegetables will help to keep your bowels moving regularly and try to drink plenty of water, but no more than 2 litres per day. Speak with your local pharmacist if you experience constipation.

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Things that will help you recover more quickly

If you live alone, and you do not have family or friends close by, organise support in advance - have family or friends come to stay with you for the first few days after surgery if possible.

Eat healthily

Eating a healthy diet will help to ensure that your body has all the nutrients it needs to heal.

Stop smoking

By not smoking - even if it's just for the time that you're recovering - you immediately start to improve your circulation and your breathing - not to mention a whole list of other benefits to the heart and lungs.

Family and friends

Family and friends can give you two important things:

- Practical help with the tasks you might be temporarily unable to do while you recover - such as driving, the weekly shop, or lifting heavier items.
- Keeping your spirits up

Keep a routine

Get up at your normal time in the morning, get dressed and move about the house. If you get tired, you can rest later.

Build up gradually

Have a go at doing some of the things you'd normally do, but build up gradually. Some suggestions are included in the recovery tracker. Obviously, everyone recovers at a different speed, so not all of the suggestions will be suitable for everybody.

When you're building up your activities, listen to what your body is telling you. If it feels painful, it's probably too early to do what you are doing. If you are concerned, consult your GP or your local hernia service, if you have one.

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Returning to work

You do not need your GP's permission to go back to work. This is ultimately your decision, but your return should be discussed with your employer.

Fact: Work can be part of your recovery

Everyone needs time off to recover after an operation, but too much of it can stand in the way of you getting back to normal. Getting back to your normal work routine sooner rather than later can actually help you to recover more quickly.

Getting back to work

How quickly you return to work very much depends on a number of things:

- How you heal.
- How you respond to surgery.
- The type of job you do.

Most patients will be back in the following time scale:

- Light/supervisory work: 1 -2 weeks
- Minimal lifting work: 2 - 3 Weeks
- Heavy labour-intensive work: 6 weeks

You will not be harmed if you return to work earlier. For some people this might mean less than a week, but there may be significant discomfort if you do. If your employer has an occupational health nurse or doctor they will advise you on this. You should contact your employer before returning to work, especially if you feel you need to return on lighter duties in the first instance. Your GP will also be able to give you advice, as will your local hernia service, if you have one.

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Planning for your return

3 golden rules for a speedy recovery:

Stay active.

Listen to your body

Keep a normal daily routine.

Talk with your Occupational Health service, your local hernia service if you have one, or your GP to work out when and how it is best for you to return to work.

Depending on the nature of your job, you might want to ask your employer about returning to work on lighter duties at first. This means:

- Doing work that is mostly paperwork, using a computer or telephone.
- Not carrying heavy items any significant distance.
- Avoiding tasks such as prolonged loading or unloading, packing or unpacking.

If you have an HR Department at work, they will be able to advise you regarding sick pay or any other benefit you may be entitled to during your time off. Alternatively, talk directly with your employer.

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Driving

Ultimately, it is your responsibility to ensure that you are in control of the vehicle at all times and to feel confident that you would be able to demonstrate this, if asked.

Normally, you should refrain from driving for at least 1 week after a hernia repair operation. You should be free from the distracting effect of pain or the sedative or other effects of any pain relief medication you are taking. You also need to be free of any physical restrictions due to your operation, be comfortable in the driving position and be able to safely control your car, including freely performing an emergency stop.

Your insurance company should be informed about your operation. Some companies will not insure drivers for a number of weeks after surgery, so it's important to check what your policy says. Driving too soon may invalidate your insurance cover.

Driving - an exercise

Before driving your car, you might want to test your fitness to drive. Do this in a safe place without putting the keys in the ignition: simply sit in the driving seat and practise putting firm pressure on the pedals. If you feel pain, driving at this time may be too early. If you feel sore afterwards, again, you may need to wait a day or two. Only when you can put enough pressure on the pedals to do an emergency stop – should you think about driving again.

It is advisable not to restart driving with a long journey.

Driving – Notifying the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

After hernia repair, you do not need to notify the DVLA. If you hold a Class 2 licence to drive a bus, coach or lorry, you will need to tell your doctor and follow his or her advice on when it is safe to re-commence driving. Higher medical standards are required for those holding a Class 2 licence, so for reasons of safety and comfort your doctor may advise you to delay driving for a little longer. You will also need to agree this with your employer. Check the DVLA website for further information.

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Recovery tracker

Days Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
1–2 days	Your wound will be sore from the operation and you may have swelling and bruising around the wound and scrotal region. Women may experience localised swelling and bruising around the wound. This is all normal and is nothing to worry about; it will subside usually within 2 weeks. If you would like to, monitor your progress using the recovery diary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Get up, get dressed, and move around the house.• Eat and drink as normal.• If you are experiencing discomfort, take your pain relief medication.		No


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Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
3 days	There should be much less pain around the wound. You should be able to move a lot more easily than in the past couple of days. Remember, every 24 hours makes a big difference to your recovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Walking is the perfect way to recover from your hernia repair. There are no restrictions regarding the amount of time you wish to spend out and about, but listen to what your body is telling you – everyone is different and some people will tire sooner than others. The important point to remember is that you cannot do any harm to your hernia repair by walking; pace yourself according to your own general health and wellbeing. Walking helps to avoid stiffness of the muscles and joints.You may still occasionally need to take mild pain relief at this time.		Not just yet

Sport

For cyclists, you need to bear in mind the additional effort it will take when going up hills as this will increase the workload of your abdominal muscles and, inevitably, increase your discomfort.

You should not return to sporting activities such as football and rugby for at least 8 weeks and 12 weeks, respectively.

When can I have sex?

For many women, being able to have sex again is an important milestone in their recovery. There are no set rules or times about when it's right to do so other than whether it feels OK to you – treat it like any other physical activity and build up gradually.

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Recovery tracker

Days/Weeks Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
4–6 days	There should be very little pain now, although you may still be experiencing some discomfort and need occasional pain relief.	Continue as on day 3, building up the number of activities you do around the house, perhaps going for a slightly longer walk each day.		Getting there
7–13 days	You'll probably be able to do most things as normal, most of the time.	Continue to build up the amount of activity you're doing towards your normal levels.	 	Normally after day 7, on light duties or reduced hours
14 days +	You should be feeling well by now.	Talk with your doctor about going back to work (if you haven't already). Try to continue taking regular walks; light exercise is permitted. Swimming is also permitted once complete healing of the wound has been achieved and the scar is no longer covered with a dressing.		Yes
2–4 weeks		Most people who've had the operation will be back at work by now, unless there are special circumstances, for example, complications, or their job demands a lot of physical exertion and heavy manual work.		Yes
6 weeks		If you haven't had any complications to do with your surgery, you will be back at work by now.		Yes

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After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Activities (eg walked for ... minutes)	How have I been feeling?	Went to bed at ... pm
1				
2				

Keeping a track of what you've achieved each day will help you to stay positive and get back to enjoying your normal life more quickly.

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After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Activities (eg walked for ... minutes)	Went to bed at ... pm	How have I been feeling? Any pain?	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					

Remember, take a step-by-step approach to getting better, and build up your activities in small stages. Don't push yourself too far too fast. If you're concerned about anything, or if you feel you're not making progress fast enough, ask your surgeon or call your GP.

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After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Activities (eg walked for ... minutes)	Went to bed at ... pm	How have I been feeling? Any pain?	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
10					
11					
12					
13					
14					

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Keeping well

Because of your operation, the chances are you'll be a lot more aware of your body and how it works.

Right now is a really good time to build on the knowledge you've gained and make small changes to your lifestyle that can prevent you from experiencing certain health problems in the future. You can do this by:

- Improving your diet - get 5 portions of fresh fruit and veg per day
- Any exercise - even if it's just a few short walks each day - really will make a difference to your health.
- Quit smoking - NHS Stop Smoking Services are one of the most effective ways to stop for good - and they're completely free. Your doctor will be happy to help you.

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Website links

The internet's a great thing – anything you want to know is there for you at the click of a mouse, but do be careful about the way you use it when it comes to getting information about your health. It's hard to know which sites to trust and none of them can tell you anything that's specific to your individual medical needs.

If you do want to know more about your operation, recovery or return to work, here is a list of trusted websites that offer safe, sensible, useful information:

[Royal College of Surgeons of England](http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/)
<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>

[Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland](http://www.asgbi.org.uk/)
<http://www.asgbi.org.uk/>

[British Hernia Society](http://www.britishherniasociety.org/)
<http://www.britishherniasociety.org/>

[NHS Stop Smoking Service](http://smokefree.nhs.uk/)
<http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>

[NHS Choices](http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/Homepage.aspx)
<http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/Homepage.aspx>

[Department for Work and Pensions](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

[GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/)
<https://www.gov.uk/>

[DVLA - Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency](https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition)
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition>

Call 111 for nonemergency medical advice