

# Inguinal Hernia in Boys

**This leaflet offers more information about inguinal hernias in boys. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your baby's care.**

## What is an inguinal hernia?

During pregnancy the testicles develop inside the abdominal cavity and not in the scrotum. Four months before birth a tunnel formed by the smooth lining of the intestinal cavity pushes down into the scrotum and about two months before birth the testicles move down this tunnel into the scrotum. The tunnel should then close. In some babies the tunnel does not close completely. If the tunnel is large enough it will allow the intestines to move down toward the scrotum, particularly when the baby cries. Hernias are more common in boys who are born prematurely.

## Why does your baby need an operation?

The intestine can move in and out of the abdomen quite easily but as your baby gets bigger the hernia tends to get bigger and may get stuck. This can lead to a blockage of the intestine or damage to the blood vessels to the testicle. If this happens, emergency surgery is required as the testicle or bowel may become damaged.

## What does the surgery involve?

The surgery is done under a general anaesthetic. The surgeon will make a cut (incision) in your baby's groin. The intestine will be pulled back into the abdomen and the hole in the tunnel will be repaired with stitches and the skin closed with stitches under the surface. Local anaesthetic will also be used to numb the skin so as to reduce any pain the baby may feel after waking. A small dressing may be applied.

## **What happens after the operation?**

Occasionally after an anaesthetic your baby may need a little help with their breathing and if they have recently had oxygen, they may continue to need oxygen or be ventilated.

Milk feeds can usually be restarted once your baby begins to wake up.

## **Are there any complications?**

- Hernia repairs are usually straightforward and successful and the testicle stays in the proper position. A return of the hernia is possible and can occur in one in 50 cases.
- Infection and significant bleeding are very rare.
- There is a small risk of injury to the testicle or blood vessel to the testicle that may result in poor growth or even loss of the testicle. This might not be obvious until about one year of age.

## **Caring for your baby after surgery**

Keep the area clean and dry for two days. If the area becomes soiled with faeces (poo), wash with water and gently pat dry. After two days your baby may have a bath but do not use bubble bath.

The stitches (sutures) are under the skin and dissolvable. They usually take up to a year to dissolve.

Following discharge your baby will be seen in the outpatients department by the surgical team.

## **If St George's Hospital is not your local hospital**

Once your baby has had surgery and made a good recovery, i.e. when their specialist medical and nursing requirements are less, the baby will be transferred back to the care of your local hospital. This transfer is a sign of progress and will not occur until the baby is ready. It will allow you to be closer to home and become familiar with your local healthcare professionals.

## Useful sources of information

### BLISS

Bliss is a support group which is able to offer support and advice to families with babies with a range of conditions.



Fourth Floor  
Maya House  
134-138 Borough High Street  
London SE1 1LB  
Contact: 020 7378 1122  
Email: [hello@bliss.org.uk](mailto:hello@bliss.org.uk)  
Website: [www.bliss.org.uk](http://www.bliss.org.uk)

Use your smartphone to scan the QR code (you may need to download a QR code scanning.)

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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