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PATIENT INFORMATION ON INGUINAL HERNIAS

This leaflet will give you more information if your doctor has said that you have an inguinal hernia.

A hernia occurs when an internal part of the body pushes through a weakness in the muscle or surrounding tissue wall. The lump can often be pushed back in or disappears when you lie down. Coughing or straining may make the lump appear.

Inguinal hernias occur when fatty tissue or a part of your bowel pokes through into your groin at the top of your inner thigh. This is the most common type of hernia. It's often associated with ageing and repeated strain on the tummy.

With an inguinal hernia, you have two main choices. They are to make lifestyle changes and take painkillers as necessary or to have an operation. An operation is not suitable for everyone, so may not be an option for you. Your doctor will talk about it with you. Think about what you need, what you enjoy doing and how you live.

Questions you might want to ask about the different treatments you can try

Questions	Lifestyle and weight loss	Painkillers
What is the treatment?	You will probably need to make lifestyle changes like avoiding heavy lifting. It could also mean wearing a special belt called a 'truss'. You will need to watch for changes to the hernia.	You can support lifestyle changes by also taking painkillers like ibuprofen or paracetamol. They help some people with their pain.
What will happen to my symptoms?	Symptoms don't go away completely, and they might get worse. But if this happens you may want to take painkillers.	As you take painkillers you should be able to do more and this can help reduce pain further.
Are there any risks?	Sometimes even if you make lifestyle changes the hernia may get bigger, more uncomfortable, or stuck (irreducible) in the groin or scrotum. If this happens you may need an emergency operation to prevent serious problems like bowel obstruction.	Side effects are rare but as with any medicine there may be some. For example, anti-inflammatories like ibuprofen can increase your risk of stomach bleeding.

What will my quality of life be like?	<p>Making some lifestyle changes should improve your quality of life.</p> <p>However, hernias can cause pain, limit leisure activities and cause people to take time off work. If you're suffering, then speak to your doctor.</p>	<p>You'll probably start feeling relief within a few days. If you don't then it's time to speak to your doctor and discuss whether you are suitable for an operation.</p>
What else can I do?	<p>• An operation <i>This operation may not be suitable for everyone. An operation is usually for people who have tried other treatments first.</i></p> <p>Most people with inguinal hernia are free of symptoms by two weeks after the operation. However, about three out of 10 people continue to feel pain and discomfort where the hernia was.</p> <p>Just under one in four people do get complications after the operation. The main long-term health problems are chronic pain, that may last for several years, and 10 in 100 hernias come back</p>	

When to seek medical advice

See a GP if you think you have a hernia. They may refer you to hospital for surgical treatment, if necessary.

You should go your nearest A&E straight away if you have a hernia and you develop any of the following symptoms:

- sudden, severe pain
- being sick
- difficulty pooing or passing wind
- the hernia becomes firm or tender, or cannot be pushed back in

These symptoms could mean that either:

- the blood supply to a section of organ or tissue trapped in the hernia has become cut off (strangulation)
- a piece of bowel has entered the hernia and become blocked (obstruction)

A strangulated hernia and obstructed bowel are medical emergencies and need to be treated as soon as possible.

Useful contacts

- Ask your pharmacist
- Patient UK - www.patient.co.uk
- NHS Choices, www.nhs.uk/conditions/

If you have further questions:

Call the **practice** on *01285 653184 or 01285 653122*

If you require **urgent** medical advice, call *111 (24 Hrs)*

In an **emergency** call **999**