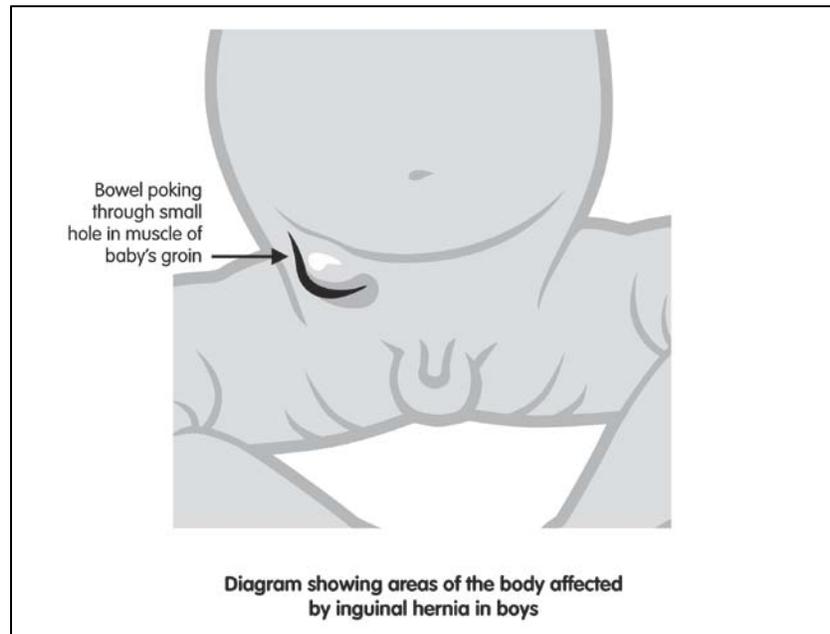


Inguinal hernia in boys



Inguinal (groin) hernias are quite common and occur in around one in six male premature babies. These hernias usually require an operation.

What is a hernia?

An inguinal hernia is a small hole that has developed in the muscle of your baby's groin. Some of the bowel from your baby's tummy is poking out through this hole. We do not know why this happens in some babies but not in others.

Why is an operation needed?

The bowel in the hernia usually moves in and out of the hole quite easily. Sometimes the bowel can get stuck in the hernia leading to blockage of, and possibly damage to the bowel or to the blood vessels that lead to the testicle. If this happens, emergency surgery may be needed and the bowel or testicle may be damaged.

What does the operation involve?

Under anaesthetic, a cut will be made in your baby's groin. The hole in the muscle will be repaired with stitches and the skin closed with stitches under the surface. A small dressing may be applied. Local anaesthetic will also be used to numb the skin and reduce any pain your baby may feel after waking.

What happens after the surgery?

Occasionally following anaesthetic, babies may have a change in their breathing pattern for a few hours, therefore your baby will be observed carefully for signs of irregular breathing. Usually your baby should be ready to return home, or to your local newborn unit, the next morning.

What are the complications and risks of the operation?

Surgery is usually very straightforward, however, there are some risks involved:

- Bruising around the hernia repair can be quite marked and can cause some swelling in a few babies. This usually goes down in a few days.
- A wound infection may occur causing redness and discharge of pus a few days after surgery. Antibiotics may be needed.
- In rare cases the hernia may come back and a further operation may then be needed. This can even happen within a day or two of the surgery.
- Occasionally the testicle may become higher during the first few years of life and an operation is needed to fix the testicle down.
- There is a small risk of injury to the testicle's blood vessel, that may result in poor growth or even loss of the testicle. This might not be obvious until about one year of age.

Although most babies only have a hernia on one side, some have a hernia on both sides. If this is the case in your baby, both hernias will be fixed in one operation. Some babies who only have one hernia can develop another hernia within the next two years, requiring a later operation.

Caring for your baby after surgery

Your baby can be bathed as normal although water on the wound may sting in the first two days. If there is any dressing this can be removed at five days and a nurse will arrange this for you. If there is any redness or discharge from the wound please seek medical advice.

More information about Bliss and its services

Further advice, support and information can be requested by phoning our Family Support Helpline on freephone **0500 618140**. The line is open from 9am to 9pm, Monday to Friday. You can also email us at enquiries@bliss.org.uk