

Script – Print - Hernias: More Common Than You Think Surgery is the Only Treatment Option

If you've ever noticed a lump in your abdomen or groin, there's a chance it could be a hernia.

Hernias are common. They can affect men, women, and children. Some babies are born with weak abdominal muscles and may be more likely to get a hernia. Adults can develop hernias by straining during a bowel movement, strenuous activity, pregnancy or chronic coughing or sneezing. Smokers also tend to develop more hernias than non-smokers.

"Your abdomen is lined with a tough muscular lining that holds all the organs in," said Dr. Marc Whitman, General Surgeon, OSF HealthCare. "A hernia is when there is a defect or weakness in one area of that lining and that allows an organ or a fatty tissue from inside the abdomen to protrude through the hole."

Some of the most common symptoms of a hernia are:

- Swelling or bulge in the groin
- Increased pain at the site of the bulge
- Pain while lifting
- A dull aching feeling

"The first and most obvious symptom is a bulge," said Dr. Marc Whitman, General Surgeon, OSF HealthCare. "Anyone who's had a hernia will appreciate a bulge in the area of the hernia. Some people will have associated pain with it or some discomfort. But the main thing is a bulge."

There are many types of hernias. The most common type is inguinal or femoral, which make up between 75 and 80 percent of all hernias. In an inguinal hernia, fatty tissue or a part of the intestine pokes into the groin at the top of the inner thigh. Inguinal hernias affect men more than women. Femoral hernias are less common, and mainly impact older women.

"There are certain areas of the body that are common for hernias to occur," said Dr. Marc Whitman, General Surgeon, OSF HealthCare. "The groin (hernia) is very common in men and that's called inguinal. People can also get hernias at the belly button and that's called an umbilical hernia, and any time you've had a previous surgery there's a risk of a herniation related to the closure, that's called an incisional or a ventral hernia."

According to Dr. Whitman, hernias do not get better on their own, and surgery is the typical route of treatment. The three types of hernia surgery are: open surgery, laparoscopic surgery and robotic hernia repair. There are more than one million surgical hernia operations performed each year in the U.S.

If left untreated, a hernia can become larger, more painful or can develop complications over time. An untreated hernia can cause an obstruction, which can lead to nausea and stomach

pain, as well as strangulation, where part of the intestine is trapped in a way that cuts off its blood supply. Dr. Whitman says it's important to pay close attention to any changes to your body and to contact your physician if you suspect a problem.

"We encourage people with hernias to be seen and we discuss this with them in the office; people who are healthy enough to have surgery without the risk of complications should have their hernias repaired," said Dr. Marc Whitman, General Surgeon, OSF HealthCare.

For more information, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).