

5 Simple Steps to Lower Your Risk of Developing a Hernia



Hernias affect approximately 5% of Americans during their lifetime.¹ Although developing a hernia may not be completely preventable, especially for people with higher risk factors such as obesity, smoking, and family history, below are a few ways to help lower your risk of developing a hernia.

- 1. Use Proper Lifting Techniques** – Avoid heavy lifting when possible. Whether for your job or lifestyle, if you must lift heavy objects, be sure to use proper lifting techniques (such as lifting with your legs, not your back) and avoid jerking or twisting movements.
- 2. Exercise With Intent and Increase Core Strength** – Warm up before a workout and cooldown after. Be sure to avoid overexertion and stop if a routine gets too intense. Begin with low-intensity exercises and gradually progress through a fitness routine; always listen to your body and take a break if you feel uncomfortable. Be sure to stop if you feel any pain.² Core-strengthening exercises can also help to strengthen the muscles surrounding your abdomen and groin which can help your muscles stay strong and elastic.³
- 3. Maintain a Healthy Body Weight** – Being overweight or obese puts tremendous pressure on the abdominal wall and stress on other muscles.³ The extra strain may weaken key areas associated with developing a hernia including the stomach, chest and groin.⁴ A healthy weight can reduce this pressure and, as a result, help lower your chance of experiencing a hernia.
- 4. Quit Smoking** – Smokers and those with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) or similar diseases that cause chronic coughing are at an elevated risk for hernia due to strain on the abdomen. Additionally, smoking not only damages your lungs, but also weakens your muscles and connective tissue and inhibits cell growth, which can make you susceptible to hernias.^{2,3} Talk to your doctor about a smoking cessation plan to help you kick the habit and help reduce your chances of a hernia.
- 5. Prevent Constipation** – Constipation, lack of bowel movements, and/or excessive straining during bowel movements can all lead to a hernia. To help reduce your chances of constipation and the associated complications that may come with it, be sure to stay hydrated by drinking at least eight glasses of water a day and ensure you're getting enough fiber in your diet to regulate bowel movements. Eat smarter by making sure you consume foods like vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and legumes on a regular basis.² These tips can help your stool be softer and lead to less straining in the restroom.⁴

Talk to your doctor if you think you may have a hernia or have a higher chance of getting one in your lifetime.

Do you think you may have a hernia? [Find a local surgeon](#) to schedule a hernia consultation.

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