

Doctor discussion guide for women

Hernias can be harder to detect in women because symptoms may be subtle or occur without a visible bulge. Because of this, hernias in women may result in misdiagnosis and delayed treatment.^{1,2}

Before your appointment, take a moment to look through the questions below and pick the ones that matter most to you — whether they relate to your symptoms, your comfort level, or future plans like pregnancy. Bringing a few key questions with you can help make the conversation with your doctor more intentional.

Your symptoms deserve careful attention. If you feel unheard or don't receive a clear diagnosis, consider a second opinion from a hernia specialist.

Diagnosis

Hernias can be harder to detect in women. Trust what you're experiencing, share your symptoms clearly and speak up if you feel you need further evaluation. You always have a right to a second opinion.

- I understand hernias can be harder to detect in women. How might this affect the evaluation of my symptoms?
- What type of hernias are most common in women, and does that change how you approach diagnosis?
- I don't have a visible bulge, but I'm still experiencing ongoing symptoms such as:
 - ☐ Discomfort or pain in my belly, groin, or site of a previous surgery
 - ☐ Discomfort or pain when I bend or lift something
 - ☐ Acid reflux, heartburn, difficulty swallowing, or regurgitation
 - ☐ A feeling of weakness in the affected area
 - ☐ A constant feeling of being full
- Since a hernia could still be causing these symptoms, what testing or imaging can help confirm or rule it out?
- If we're unable to confirm whether I have a hernia today, could you refer me to a hernia specialist for further evaluation?

Repair options & mesh selection

Remember, permanent mesh isn't the only option. Ask how bioabsorbable mesh could fit your repair needs and which surgical approaches may be best for you.

- Will my hernia be repaired with mesh? What are my mesh options?
- If I simply don't want permanent mesh, is bioabsorbable mesh an option for my repair?
- I have heard about absorbable mesh. Do you use Phasix™?
- How exactly is bioabsorbable mesh different when it comes to future pregnancy and childbirth?
- Minimizing visible scarring is important to me. How might that factor into the surgical approach we consider?
- Taking that into account, along with my current needs and future plans, which approach do you recommend and why?

When told to watch and wait

Watchful waiting may be recommended, but it doesn't have to end the conversation. If you want to explore repair now, ask what options may be appropriate for you.

- I understand watchful waiting is an option, but I'd like to explore what repair might look for me now. What options are available to me?
- Even though my hernia is small, I worry that it may get bigger down the road and would prefer to repair it now. Is that an option?
- Even though my symptoms are mild, they are still impacting my daily life. I'd like to discuss repair options.
 - I am uncomfortable swallowing and having constant heartburn and would like this pain to go away. Can we discuss next steps on getting this hernia fixed?
- Aesthetically, I just don't feel comfortable with how my hernia looks. Can we discuss repair?

Potential risks & complications

As with any surgery, there are risks associated. Be sure to discuss these with your doctor.

- What are the potential risks or complications of hernia repair?
- Will a hernia repair now still allow my abdomen to expand if I get pregnant in the future?
- Is there anything I can do before surgery to lower my risk of complications?
- Is hernia recurrence likely? How about with mesh versus without?

Recovery

Understand the full road to recovery before surgery so that you can feel better prepared.

- Will my repair be fairly routine, or will I need to stay in the hospital after surgery?
- How long will it take before I can return to work or my usual activities?
- If I have a young child at home, when will it be safe to lift or carry them?
- What restrictions will I have after surgery?
- Will I need prescription pain medication?

If you're still feeling dismissed or unheard after your appointment, remember that you're always entitled to a second opinion. There are hernia specialists that may have more experience. You can look for one in your area using our Surgeon Finder tool.

FIND A LOCAL SURGEON



[1. https://thomashosurgery.com/hernias-in-women/](https://thomashosurgery.com/hernias-in-women/)

[2. https://www.brownhealth.org/be-well/hernias-women-risk-factors-symptoms-and-prevention](https://www.brownhealth.org/be-well/hernias-women-risk-factors-symptoms-and-prevention)