Hernias and Hydroceles: Pre-Operative Information

What is a hernia/hydrocele?
The testicles begin to develop in the abdomen. In most boys, they move down into the scrotum before birth. As this happens, some of the lining of the abdomen (called the peritoneum) comes down a a tube with the testicle. In most boys, the tube that forms the connection between the peritoneum and the scrotum is closed at birth; but in some boys it remains open, forming a pocket. If the fluid produced in the abdomen goes into the pocket, then it is called a hydrocele. About 1 in 3 newborn boys will have a small hydrocele, most of them close on their own. If the bowel goes into the pocket, it is called a hernia. Both the hernia/hydrocele cause swelling in the scrotum or lower groin. In girls, swelling due to the hernia occurs in the pubic area or lower abdomen.

Is it serious?
Not usually. If the child has a hernia, the intestine can get trapped in the pocket and can kink. When this occurs, the child will be fussy or uncomfortable, may vomit, and have diarrhea or constipation. You may notice that the hernia is larger than before. If you notice that the hernia is firmer, more red, or tender, your child needs to be seen by the doctor as soon as possible. Fortunately, this doesn’t happen often.

Please see reverse side
**Should a hydrocele be repaired as soon as possible?**

No, not necessarily. If the hydrocele is still present at six months of age, it likely will not go away by itself and your doctor will discuss surgery with you. If there is a hernia with bowel in it, repair during infancy will be done.

**How can a hernia/hydrocele be repaired?**

This can be corrected with an operation that is done and the child is sent home the same day. And incision is made in the groin so that the pocket can be found and opened, the bowel is then placed back in the abdomen. A hernia or hydrocele may also be present on the opposite side. If a problem is found, it can be repaired at the same time.

**If you have questions**

If you have any questions or concerns, please call your child’s doctor at Pediatric Surgical Associates at (612) 813-8000 or 1-800-992-6983.