**Treatment Options for Hernias**

Hernia repairs are common—more than one million hernia repairs are performed each year in the U.S. Approximately 800,000 are to repair inguinal hernias and the rest are for other types of hernias.1

* **Non-Surgical**
  + **Watchful Waiting** - Your surgeon will watch the hernia and make sure that it is not getting larger or causing problems. Although surgery is the only treatment that can repair hernias, many surgical procedures are elective for adult inguinal hernias. Watchful waiting is an option for people who do not have complications or symptoms with their hernias, and if recommended by their surgeon.
* **Surgical**
  + **Laparoscopic** - The surgeon makes several small incisions in the abdomen that allow surgical tools into the openings to repair the hernia. Laparoscopic surgery can be performed with or without surgical mesh.
  + **Open Repair** - The surgeon makes an incision near the hernia and the weak muscle area is repaired. Open repair can be done with or without surgical mesh. Open repair that uses sutures without mesh is referred to as primary closure. Primary closure is used to repair inguinal hernias in infants, small hernias, strangulated or infected hernias.

Hernias have a high rate of recurrence, and surgeons often use surgical mesh to strengthen the hernia repair and reduce the rate of recurrence. Since the 1980s, there has been an increase in mesh-based hernia repairs—by 2000, non-mesh repairs represented less than 10% of groin hernia repair techniques.

The use of surgical mesh may also improve patient outcomes through decreased operative time and minimized recovery time. However, recovery time depends on the type of hernia, the surgical approach, and the patient’s condition both before and after surgery.

Information found in medical literature has consistently demonstrated a reduced hernia recurrence rate when surgical mesh is used to repair the hernia compared to hernia repair without surgical mesh. For example, inguinal hernia recurrence is higher with open repair using sutures (primary closure) than with mesh repair2.

Despite reduced rates of recurrence, there are situations where the use of surgical mesh for hernia repair may not be recommended. Patients should talk to their surgeons about their specific circumstances and their best options and alternatives for hernia repair.

**Surgical Mesh**

Surgical mesh is a medical device that is used to provide additional support to weakened or damaged tissue. The majority of surgical mesh devices currently available for use are constructed from synthetic materials or animal tissue.

Surgical mesh made of synthetic materials can be found in knitted mesh or non-knitted sheet forms. The synthetic materials used can be absorbable, non-absorbable or a combination of absorbable and non-absorbable materials.

Animal-derived mesh are made of animal tissue, such as intestine or skin, that has been processed and disinfected to be suitable for use as an implanted device. These animal-derived mesh are absorbable. The majority of tissue used to produce these mesh implants are from a pig (porcine) or cow (bovine) source.

Non-absorbable mesh will remain in the body indefinitely and is considered a permanent implant. It is used to provide permanent reinforcement to the repaired hernia. Absorbable mesh will degrade and lose strength over time. It is not intended to provide long-term reinforcement to the repair site. As the material degrades, new tissue growth is intended to provide strength to the repair.