

Umbilical Hernia Diet Plan: Post-Surgery Dos and Don'ts



An [umbilical](#) (or belly button) hernia occurs when a part of the intestines or the abdominal lining protrudes through an opening in the abdominal muscles. Umbilical hernias often cause a noticeable bulge near the belly button, which may look like a swollen or ruptured area, especially in [babies](#). Since hernias occur in the abdominal area, they can sometimes lead to symptoms that feel like digestive issues, such as belly pain, nausea, vomiting, or constipation, according to the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP).¹ Digestive issues like bloating and constipation can aggravate abdominal hernias by putting extra strain on the area.²

[See Umbilical Hernia Signs and Symptoms Checklist](#)

In Adults:

Maintaining a [healthy weight](#) and avoiding excessive strain on the abdominal muscles is crucial for managing umbilical hernias.³ Diet alone cannot treat an umbilical hernia, but eating certain foods and avoiding others can help you manage hernia symptoms—both before and after hernia surgery.⁴

Doctors often suggest a special diet plan for umbilical hernia patients to help prevent further complications.⁵ Each person is different and tolerates food differently. Some people may experience umbilical hernia symptoms even when they limit their diet to foods that are typically less likely to cause symptoms.

Below are some general tips to help manage umbilical hernia symptoms:

- **Fruits & Vegetables:** Fresh vegetables and fruits that have good fiber content and are rich in antioxidants should be a part of every meal. In addition to helping to prevent constipation, their antioxidants can help boost your immune system.^{2,5}
- **Protein:** Lean meats—like poultry and fish—are a great source of protein that can aid in tissue repair.⁵ Additionally, low-fat dairy products can be alternated with lean meats to provide your body with sufficient protein.⁴
- **Whole grains:** Whole grains such as brown rice, quinoa, whole wheat flour, and oats can aid in digestion and provide essential nutrients and fiber while helping to maintain regular digestion.⁴
- **Water:** Staying adequately hydrated is crucial for proper digestion and overall health. Aim for at least eight glasses of water per day.⁶
- **Fatty Food:** Saturated or trans fats food items such as red meat, processed food, high-fat dairy products, and hydrogenated vegetable oil can lead to inflammation and an increase in weight.⁵
- **Fiber to Avoid:** While eating fiber can help avoid constipation, certain fibrous foods such as white bread, all purpose flour, instant rice, and pasta may cause more gas and bloating than others—leading to increased abdominal pressure. Mushrooms, onions and garlic, cruciferous vegetables like cabbage and broccoli, and fruits like apples, pears, cherries and dried fruit should be eaten in moderation. Additionally, gas-inducing foods like milk and cheese, beer and other carbonated drinks, chewing gum, and hard candy should be limited.⁷
- **Post-Surgery:** After surgery, patients can typically eat their normal diet, though your doctor may recommend certain changes. Ask your doctor about what food you can eat, and others you may want to avoid after surgery. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt. Additionally, if your bowel movements are not regular right after surgery, try to avoid straining and constipation. Drink plenty of water. Your doctor may suggest fiber, a stool softener, or a mild laxative.⁸

In Children:⁹

- **Liquids are Important:** Liquids may prevent constipation and straining during a bowel movement. Ask your doctor how much liquid to give your child each day and which liquids are best for him or her.
- **Fiber:** Fiber may prevent constipation and straining during a bowel movement.

Adopting a balanced and nutritious diet plays a big role in both pre and [post-surgery hernia management](#). Choosing foods that support healing, reduce inflammation, and promote overall health can enhance your body's ability to recover from hernias. As always, be sure to consult with your [doctor](#) or surgeon about the best food options for your specific circumstances.

1. <https://www.aafp.org/pubs/afp/issues/2000/0215/p1037.html> 2. <https://www.healthline.com/health/hernia#causes> 3. <https://www.farnorthsurgery.com/blog/how-lifestyle-choices-can-impact-hernia-development> 4. <https://www.templehealth.org/about/blog/6-tips-for-good-nutrition-after-surgery> 5. <https://www.lybrate.com/topic/umbilical-hernia-diet/abc1d42ff49a6e15f3e71766b1c8f41a> 6. <https://www.herniainnovations.com/blog/what-foods-should-you-eat-during-umbilical-hernia-surgery-recovery> 7. <https://www.livestrong.com/article/456999-foods-to-avoid-with-hernia/> 8. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/323416#other> 9. <https://www.drugs.com/cg/umbilical-hernia-in-children.html>