



PERSPECTIVE

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Advancements in Surgery: Laparoscopic Hiatal Hernia Repair

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Description

Hiatal hernias are a common condition where a portion of the stomach protrudes through the diaphragm into the chest cavity, leading to various symptoms such as heartburn, regurgitation, and chest pain. In recent years, laparoscopic hiatal hernia repair has emerged as a minimally invasive surgical technique, offering patients a quicker recovery and reduced postoperative discomfort compared to traditional open surgeries.

A hiatal hernia occurs when the upper part of the stomach pushes through the diaphragm, the muscle that separates the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity. There are two main types of hiatal hernias: sliding hernias, where the stomach and the esophagus slide into the chest, and paraesophageal hernias, where a portion of the stomach bulges through the diaphragm beside the esophagus.

Indications for surgery

While not all hiatal hernias require surgical intervention, certain cases may benefit from laparoscopic repair. Common indications for surgery are given below.

Severe symptoms: Patients experiencing severe symptoms such as chronic Gastro Esophageal Reflux Disease (GERD), difficulty swallowing, or chest pain may be candidates for surgery.

Complications: Hiatal hernias that lead to complications such as bleeding, ulcers, or obstruction may require surgical intervention.

Failure of conservative measures: When lifestyle changes, medications, and other non-surgical treatments fail to provide relief, surgery becomes a viable option.

The laparoscopic approach: Laparoscopic hiatal hernia repair, also known as laparoscopic

fundoplication, involves making small incisions in the abdomen through which a laparoscope and specialized instruments are inserted. The laparoscope, a thin tube with a camera, allows the surgeon to visualize the internal structures on a monitor and perform the surgery with precision.

Advantages of laparoscopic hiatal hernia repair

Minimally invasive: One of the primary benefits of laparoscopic surgery is its minimally invasive nature. The small incisions result in less trauma to the surrounding tissues, reducing pain and accelerating the recovery process.

Faster recovery: Compared to open surgery, laparoscopic hiatal hernia repair typically leads to a faster recovery. Patients may experience less postoperative pain, a shorter hospital stay, and an earlier return to regular activities.

Reduced scarring: The smaller incisions result in minimal scarring, contributing to improved cosmetic outcomes and patient satisfaction.

Lower risk of complications: The risk of complications, such as infections and hernia recurrence, may be lower with laparoscopic surgery due to the precision afforded by the laparoscope.

Surgical procedure

Creation of working ports: Small incisions are made in the abdomen to create ports through which the laparoscope and instruments are introduced.

Hiatal dissection: The surgeon carefully dissects the herniated stomach from the chest cavity, returning it to its normal position in the abdomen.

Fundoplication: Fundoplication involves wrapping the top of the stomach around the lower esophagus to create a valve mechanism that prevents acid reflux. This step is crucial for addressing GERD symptoms associated with hiatal hernias.

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Closure of the hiatus: The surgeon reinforces the diaphragmatic hiatus to prevent the recurrence of the hernia.

Postoperative care and recovery

Dietary changes: Patients are often advised to follow a modified diet, gradually transitioning from liquids to soft foods and, eventually, a regular diet as tolerated.

Activity gradual resumption: While patients are encouraged to engage in light activities shortly after surgery, strenuous exercises and heavy lifting should be avoided during the initial weeks of recovery.

Follow-up appointments: Regular follow-up appointments with the surgeon are essential to

monitor the healing process and address any concerns or complications.

Laparoscopic hiatal hernia repair represents a significant advancement in surgical techniques, providing a less invasive and more patient-friendly approach to addressing this common condition. With its advantages of reduced postoperative discomfort, quicker recovery, and lower risk of complications, laparoscopic surgery has become the preferred option for many patients and surgeons alike. As technology continues to advance, it is likely that the field of minimally invasive surgery will see further refinements, offering even better outcomes for individuals with hiatal hernias.