

Omphalocele

An omphalocele is a type of hernia. Hernia means "rupture." An omphalocele is a birth defect in which the infant's intestine or other abdominal organs, the liver and/or spleen, stick out of the belly button (navel) area. It occurs before birth while the fetus is forming in its mother's uterus. In babies with an omphalocele, the intestines and other abdominal organs are covered only by a thin layer of tissue and can be easily seen.

There are different sizes of omphaloceles. In small ones, only the intestines stick out. In larger ones, the liver or spleen may stick out of the body as well. Also, the abdominal cavity itself may be small due to underdevelopment during pregnancy.

Many babies born with an omphalocele also have other birth defects. Thirty percent have a chromosomal (genetic) abnormality, most commonly Trisomy 13, Trisomy 18, Trisomy 21, Turner syndrome, or triploidy. Some infants have Beckwith-Wiedemann syndrome (an overgrowth malformation syndrome). More than half of these babies have abnormalities of other organs or body parts, most commonly the spine, digestive system, heart, urinary system, and limbs.

Treatment consists of an operation(s) to put the organs back into the abdomen. How many organs outside of the body will determine how many operations will need to be done. Also, because the abdominal cavity may be too small to hold all of the organs that are outside the body, more than one operation may be required. How well a child does during an operation depends on any other conditions the child may have and other associated birth defects.

Future problems for these babies include the size of the omphalocele; if there was a loss of blood flow to part of the intestine or other organs; and the extent of other abnormalities. Babies may have long term problems with digestion, elimination, and infection depending upon how much damage there is to the intestines or other abdominal organs.

NOTE: This Web page was compiled from a variety of sources including the online resources of Medline Plus, National Institutes of Health, St. Louis Children's Hospital and other resources listed below, but is not intended to substitute or replace the professional medical advice you receive from your physician. The content provided here is for informational purposes only, and was not designed to diagnose or treat a health problem or disease. Please consult your health care provider with any questions or concerns you may have regarding this specific condition.

Resources

NOTE: This page contains links to other World Wide Web sites with information about this disorder. The Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) hopes you find these sites helpful. Remember the DHSS does not control nor does it necessarily endorse the information presented on these web sites.

For a complete list of resources related to birth defects, including state programs and resources, support groups and non-for-profit organizations click on the following link.

<http://www.health.mo.gov/living/families/genetics/birthdefects/resources.php>

- [MedlinePlus](#)
- [National Institutes of Health](#)
- [St. Louis Children's Hospital](#)

Genetic Tertiary Centers

How to Obtain Genetic Services

Your family physician can usually provide information regarding genetic services in your area. Genetic clinics are periodically held in a location near you. For information, contact one of the centers listed below.

[Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center](#)

St. Louis, Missouri 314-577-5639

[Children's Hospital at University Hospital and Clinics](#)

Columbia, Missouri 573-882-6991

[Children's Mercy Hospital](#)

Kansas City, Missouri 816-234-3290

[St. Louis Children's Hospital](#)

St. Louis, Missouri 314-454-6093