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.

Resources

For a complete list of resources related to birth defects, including state programs and resources, support groups and ton-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