

Hernia Surgery Made Simple – Your Guide to Understanding and Healing

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- › Hernias are progressive weaknesses in muscle or tissue that won't heal on their own; delaying surgery makes repair more complicated and risky over time
- › Choosing the right surgeon is key: look for experience, clear communication, and a willingness to advocate for your specific surgical preferences and mesh materials
- › Hernia repair surgery offers multiple approaches, including open and minimally invasive techniques, with various mesh options like synthetic, biologic, and hybrid materials
- › Recovery requires patience – expect at least a week of downtime, plan for assistance, manage pain carefully, and avoid exercise and strenuous activities while allowing your body to heal properly
- › Being an active health care advocate means asking questions, understanding your surgical options, and prioritizing quality of care over convenience

Imagine noticing a small bulge in your groin or belly that doesn't hurt much. You might think, "No big deal, I'll deal with it later." That's exactly what I thought when I discovered my own hernia. For decades, I've been guiding people to take charge of their health, so I figured my healthy lifestyle would keep it under control. I waited a year to fix it – but this was a mistake.

When I spoke with Dr. Eric Pinnar, a hernia surgery specialist from Jacksonville, Florida, he set me straight: hernias don't typically heal on their own – they only get worse. In our last interview, Pinnar shared [insights into hernia repair](#) and why "watchful waiting" isn't recommended.

We still had more to discuss, so in this second interview, Pinnar shared more eye-opening insights that I wish I'd known sooner. I'm passing them along to you here – why hernias matter, how to choose a surgeon, what surgery options exist, and how to recover the right way.

My Hernia Journey – A Lesson in Not Waiting

I first spotted a small lump in my groin. It didn't bother me much, so I shrugged it off. After all, I'm physically fit – I was cranking out 125 pull-ups the day before my surgery. However, hernias aren't about fitness. They're about a weak spot in your connective tissue.

When I finally contacted Pinnar, he explained that hernias grow over time, making surgery trickier and riskier. I learned from my own surgery that delaying only ups the ante. If you notice a bulge that sticks around, don't wait like I did – get it checked out and repaired right away. As Pinnar says, "The time to fix a hernia is when you find it."

How Do You Choose the Right Surgeon for Your Hernia Repair?

Picking a surgeon isn't like picking a new gadget – you've got to get it right, and you're in the driver's seat. I fired my first surgeon, not for lack of skill, but because their office was a mess, rescheduling me four times.

That's when I turned to Pinnar. When I spoke with him, his experience and patient-first approach won me over. He even fought to get the exact mesh I wanted, despite the hassle. Here's what I tell folks to look for:

- **Experience matters** — Find someone who's done lots of hernia repairs. More surgeries under their belt mean they've seen it all.
- **Communication is key** — Your surgeon should answer your questions clearly. If they rush you out, that's a red flag.
- **Advocacy** — You want a surgeon who fights for what's best for you. Pinnar was that for me.

If you're not sure which surgeon to use, ask around — friends, family, or even online reviews can point you to someone solid. Remember, you can always get a second opinion. "You're in charge," Pinnar reminds us. Don't settle if something feels off. And if insurance limits your options, know that experts like Pinnar, who skip insurance for better care, might still be worth it if you can afford the cost.

What Are Your Surgery Options and Materials?

Hernia surgery isn't one-size-fits-all, and I learned that firsthand. You've got two main ways to fix it, plus choices about what's used to patch you up. Here's the rundown:

- **Surgery types:**
 - **Open surgery** — The surgeon makes a bigger cut to fix the hernia directly. It's tried-and-true but means more downtime.
 - **Minimally invasive surgery** — Tiny incisions with tools like a laparoscope or robot. I went with robotic laparoscopic surgery for smaller scars and quicker healing — though recovery still threw me for a loop.

I chose the minimally invasive route, and Pinnar walked me through why it fit my case. Ask your surgeon what's best for you — your hernia size and health play a role.

- **Mesh choices** — Most repairs use mesh to patch the weak spot, like reinforcing a tear in your favorite shirt. But not all mesh is the same:

- **Synthetic mesh** — **Plastic-based**, like polypropylene. Newer "lightweight" versions have bigger holes to cut down on irritation. It's inexpensive and common, but I wasn't keen on permanent plastic in my body. Still, the amount of plastic used in this type of mesh is very small and unlikely to be a significant risk for most people.
- **Biologic mesh** — Made from animal tissue, such as pig intestine. I picked this — Surgisis — because it felt more natural, even though it cost more.
- **Hybrid mesh** — Combines synthetic and dissolvable materials. Pinnar likes options like ProGrip for their ease.

I pushed for biologic mesh, and Pinnar made it happen. Ask your surgeon: "What mesh do you recommend, and why?" Make sure their reasoning clicks with you.

Preparing for Surgery — Lessons from My Experience

I thought I'd bounce back fast — but I was wrong again. When I spoke with Pinnar, he warned me recovery could be tougher than I expected, even with my fitness level. I needed a wheelchair to leave the hospital. Here's what I wish I'd done:

- **Plan downtime** — Expect at least a week off work. Even tiny incisions take time to heal. Pinnar says everyone's different — some are up fast, others need weeks.
- **Line up help** — Ideally, have someone — a spouse, friend, or hired aide — around for the first few days. You might need help getting out of bed or grabbing a snack.
- **Pain plan** — Talk to your surgeon about pain relief. I skipped meds at first and regretted it. A regional block numbed me for a day, but after that, I needed something. Medications like ibuprofen or even narcotics help — just don't overdo it.

Recovery Tips — Rest, Pain Relief, and Avoid Constipation

Recovery hit me harder than I thought, and I learned some big lessons I want to share:

- **Don't exercise while healing** – I couldn't work out like normal for weeks – even walking too much slowed me down. Your body's energy needs to go to healing, not lifting weights. Plus, pushing too soon risks undoing the repair, so give your body time to heal.
- **Take pain meds when necessary** – As mentioned, I tried to tough it out without pain medications and paid for it. Pinnar suggests ibuprofen and Tylenol together to ease off narcotics. Short-term use got me through – I wish I'd started sooner.
- **Address constipation** – Following hernia surgery, constipation is a common concern due to the disruption of normal gut function and your body's need to conserve energy for healing. While **fiber** is generally beneficial for promoting healthy bowel movements, a compromised microbiome, affected by **processed foods** and environmental toxins, leads to negative effects from fiber, such as bloating and gas.

This occurs because, in an imbalanced gut, fiber consumption results in the production of endotoxins instead of beneficial short-chain fatty acids like butyrate. **Butyrate**, a product of healthy fiber fermentation, is key for colon health, fueling colonocytes and maintaining gut barrier integrity.

A delayed-release butyrate supplement, designed to deliver butyrate directly to your colon, could bypass the need for high fiber intake in individuals with impaired gut function or those recovering from surgeries like hernia repair, where your digestive system is temporarily slowed.

In the meantime, try **magnesium**, at a dose just high enough to cause slightly loose stools. I favor magnesium glycinate and magnesium malate as they are well-absorbed and easy on the digestive system.

Be Your Own Health Care Advocate

The health care system's a jungle, but you can hack through it. Pinnar doesn't take insurance, focusing on quality care instead. I paid out-of-pocket and don't regret it – a solid investment in my health. Here's how to tackle it:

- **Insurance check** – If you've got coverage, see what's included – surgery, hospital, medications, and providers.
- **Cost clarity** – Get a clear price. Hospitals cover mesh, but special types might not be standard.
- **Take charge** – Question everything – why this approach, why that mesh? If it doesn't add up, get another opinion.

To learn more about Pinnar's practice or consult with him, you can find him online at [Advanced Hernia Specialists](#). He's an excellent resource if you're exploring options for hernia surgery.

Remember, hernias don't mess around – waiting's a gamble you don't want to take. I learned that the hard way. Act fast, find a skilled surgeon who's in your corner, weigh your options, and get prepared before surgery. You've got the power – ask questions, lean on help after surgery, and take time to heal. You'll come out stronger.

FAQs – Your Hernia Questions Answered

Q: What's the upside of hernia surgery?

A: It patches the weak spot, stops the bulge from growing, and cuts your risk of serious trouble. Early intervention also simplifies the procedure and reduces complications.

Q: Are there any downsides to hernia surgery?

A: Expect some pain, swelling, or bruising near the incision. Long-term issues are rare with a skilled surgeon. However, recovery time varies significantly, even with minimally invasive procedures.

Q: Is hernia surgery safe?

A: The procedure is routine and low-risk with a pro. Infections do happen, but they're uncommon. Choosing a surgeon with substantial experience in hernia repairs significantly lowers these risks.

Q: What's mesh for?

A: It reinforces the repair, like a sturdy patch. Options range from plastic to biologic. Your personal preferences regarding mesh materials should be thoroughly discussed with your surgeon.

Q: How do I pick the right surgeon?

A: Chat with a hernia expert like Pinnar. Ask about their track record, surgery style, and mesh preference. Don't hesitate to get a second opinion. Ensure your surgeon is willing to advocate for your desired treatment options and materials.