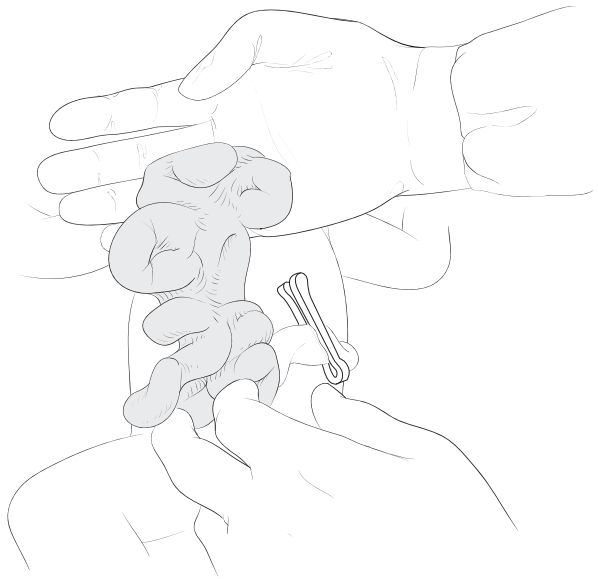
Let's Talk About...

Gastroschisis

Gastroschisis (GAS-trow-SKI-sis) is a condition that happens while a baby develops before birth. The skin and muscle do not form completely over a part of the belly. This results in an opening in the belly, usually on the right side of the umbilical cord. The intestines push through the hole and they are outside the body when the baby is born. The intestines are outside in the amniotic fluid for a long time, and they become thicker and do not work well at first.



How is gastroschisis treated?

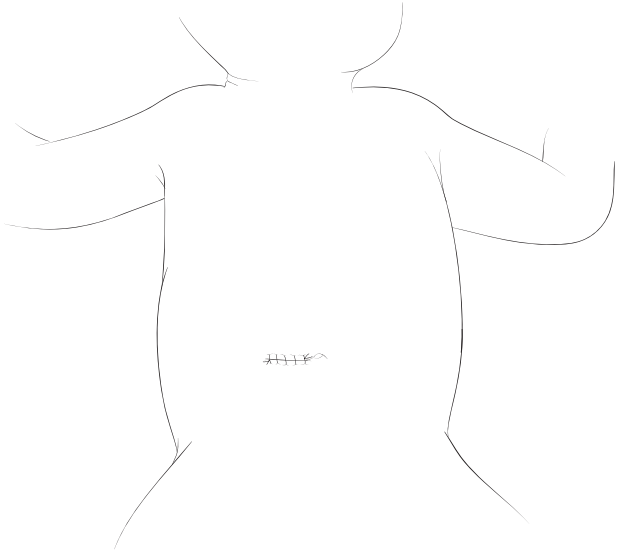
The surgeon will put the intestines back into your baby's belly and cover the opening. Until surgery, your baby's bowels will be. placed in a soft, plastic tube called a silo.Your baby will be kept warm to help keep in body fluids and heat. He will receive fluids and antibiotics through a tiny tube placed in a vein (IV). Your baby will not be allowed any regular food at this time. Instead, he will be fed through an IV with fluids called total parenteral nutrition (TPN). TPN contains protein, fat, sugar, vitamins, and minerals and will meet all your baby's nutritional needs.

Your baby will have a tube placed either through the nose (nasal gastric or NG) or the mouth (oral gastric or OG) all the way to the stomach. This tube will prevent your baby from choking or breathing stomach contents into the lungs.

During surgery, your baby's organs will be put back inside the belly. Depending on your baby's needs, the surgeon will either repair the gastroschisis with a primary closure (all at one time) or a staged closure (a little at a time over many days).

Primary Closure

The surgeon puts the entire bowel and any other organs into the belly and closes the skin with stitches.



Staged Closure

Sometimes the intestines cannot be placed into the belly at the first surgery. This is because the

intestines don't fit in the belly right away. In this case, the bowel is placed temporarily into a sterile bag or "silo." The silo is attached to the belly with the intestines inside the bag and the bag is held above the baby. Over the next few days or weeks, the surgeon pushes a small portion of the bowel into the belly until all the organs are inside and then the surgeon closes the skin with stitches.

How will my baby receive nutrition?

Your baby will not be able to eat for a while. During this time, he will have a special IV called a central line. The central line can be kept in place for a longer time than a regular IV and delivers TPN fluids to give your baby enough nutrition. Your baby may need TPN fluids for several weeks to months, depending on how quickly his intestines start to work normally.

Once the intestines are totally inside the body, your baby passes stool, and the bowel is working properly, he may begin to receive small feedings. As your baby begins to take these feedings, the TPN fluids are gradually reduced until he is getting all his nutrition through feedings. This process can be very slow, and often babies have setbacks. At these times the feedings will have to be stopped for a period of time and slowly restarted.

When can my baby go home?

Once your baby is gaining weight and taking all his feedings by mouth, he can go home.

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