

# Hernia repair the easy way

## Laparoscopic surgery gets Acton man back to his busy summer

John Yates was not eager to have hernia surgery this past summer—not with the various projects underway at his Acton home. But Mr. Yates couldn't ignore the symptoms, which included pain in his lower left abdomen and a bulge that became more prominent throughout the day. "I put off doing anything for a few weeks," he says. "But I didn't want it to turn into an emergency."

On the other hand, Mr. Yates, who is 70, didn't want a repeat of his first hernia repair, on the right side, which was performed more than 20 years ago the traditional way, known as an open incision. "It required a hospital stay, I had a lot of pain and was recovering for several weeks," he recalls. He hoped that his surgery could be performed laparoscopically—through small incisions, followed by no hospital stay.

He made an appointment to see Atif Khan, MD, a general surgeon at Emerson who specializes in laparoscopic surgery, who described a very different surgical experience—one that would get Mr. Yates back to his summer plans quickly. Those plans included completing the installation of a post-and-rail fence. Mr. Yates had been carrying nine-foot poles.

"Heavy lifting can aggravate a hernia," says Dr. Khan. "If someone has symptoms, such as pain or a burning sensation, the hernia should be fixed. I believe, in the majority of patients, the best way to do that is laparoscopically, because it allows the patient to return to their normal activities quickly."

Mr. Yates had an inguinal hernia—the most common type, which is located in the groin area. During surgery, a piece of synthetic mesh is placed inside the abdomen to cover the defect, support the abdominal wall and aid in healing.

There are few individuals who are not candidates for having their hernias repaired laparoscopically, Dr. Khan notes. "Unless someone had previous surgery in the same location, such as a prostatectomy, or if the hernia is very large, the repair can be performed laparoscopically. This also can benefit individuals who had a previous open repair that failed or who have bilateral inguinal hernias—that is, on both sides—as both can be repaired at the same time laparoscopically through the same three tiny incisions.

"A laparoscopic hernia repair is a more challenging operation, so it may not always

be offered to patients depending on the surgeon's experience and preference," says Dr. Khan. "It is worth it, because it is so much easier on the patient." He has performed more than 500 laparoscopic hernia repairs.

### A quick recovery and a return to summer projects

Mr. Yates liked what he heard. "Dr. Khan laid it out clearly, including the risks," he says. "He was very professional, and I could tell that he uses the latest technology. I was very comfortable with the whole thing."


His experience, from the time he entered the Clough Surgical Center, was easier than he anticipated. "It went like clockwork," he says. "I woke up after the surgery and was relaxing at home by 2:00. I took a pain pill that evening, but I was comfortable. It was nothing like that first hernia surgery. I said to my wife 'did I have surgery today?'"

Mr. Yates took a second, and final, pain pill the next morning and began to steadily increase his activity level. "In no time, I was doing my normal stuff around the house," he says. "Within a couple of weeks, I was back to projects—finishing up the fence and installing windows."

He is in a family of clinicians where everyone was impressed with his recovery, he notes. "My wife is a nurse, my son is an anesthesiologist, and my daughter is a physical therapist," says Mr. Yates. "I would absolutely refer anyone to Dr. Khan for surgery."

Dr. Khan cites steady advances during the past decade, in surgical instruments and mesh materials, which have paved the way for easier hernia surgery. "Today, the vast majority of patients are candidates to have their hernias repaired laparoscopically," he adds.

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John Yates had laparoscopic hernia surgery, which meant a fast recovery and a return to summer projects.