

INGUINAL HERNIA VS. HYDROCELE REFERRAL GUIDELINE

MAINE MEDICAL PARTNERS - PEDIATRIC SURGERY • 887 CONGRESS ST, SUITE 300, PORTLAND, ME • (207) 662-5555

HIGH RISK

SUGGESTED EMERGENT CONSULTATION

SYMPTOMS AND LABS

Signs of incarceration and/or strangulation – Vomiting, pain at groin with firm, irreducible bulge

EXAM/Symptoms: +/- Distended belly, abdominal pain, tympanic; firm bulge irreducible, +/- skin redness

SUGGESTED PREVISIT WORKUP

No labs or imaging recommended

RECOMMEND: brief attempt (3-5 mins) at reduction with slow constant pressure*

And

Call our office number (207) 662-5555, 24hrs/day, 7 days/week

MODERATE RISK

SUGGESTED CONSULTATION OR CO-MANAGEMENT

SYMPTOMS AND LABS

Asymptomatic: parents report waxing and waning groin or scrotal swelling (i.e. suspicious for hernia or communicating hydrocele)

Reducible inguinal hernia, nontender

SUGGESTED WORKUP

No labs or imaging recommended

Call our office or fax for surgical referral, Phone: (207) 662-5555
Fax: (207) 662-5526

Typically will schedule within 2 weeks

LOW RISK

SUGGESTED ROUTINE CARE

SYMPTOMS AND LABS

Child is asymptomatic; parents report bulge in scrotum only without change (i.e. noncommunicating hydrocele)

EXAM: Persistent scrotal bulge, nontender, may or may not transilluminate

SUGGESTED MANAGEMENT

No labs or imaging recommended

If < 1yo - Continue watchful waiting with rechecks at well-child visits

If > 1yo - Consider surgical referral; some parents may prefer to continue observation until 2yo

CLINICAL PEARLS

- Imaging (U/S, CT, etc) generally not helpful because they're usually only diagnostic if there is something herniated, in which case physical exam is just as accurate. Exception is testicular torsion, and U/S in ER is indicated.
- Both inguinal hernias and communicating hydroceles are openings to the inguinal canal/scrotum from the abdominal cavity that never closed during development. A hernia has an opening big enough to allow mobile structures like bowel or ovaries through, and produce a bulge that starts in the groin and can extend down into the scrotum; communicating hydroceles have a small opening that only allows fluid through, and the bulge is generally just in the scrotum.
- Asymptomatic noncommunicating hydroceles can be observed (90% resolution by 1yo)
- *Attempts at hernia reduction involve gentle traction on the testicle, which straightens out the cord structures and opens up the internal ring, and slow compression of the bulge up towards the internal ring.
- Other causes for acute scrotum pain – Testicular torsion, torsion of appendix testis, epididymitis



Normal



Noncommunicating Hydrocele



Communicating Hydrocele



Inguinal Hernia

Source: Ashcraft's Pediatric Surgery, 6th Edition, 2014

Maine Medical
PARTNERS