

Hypospadias

Hypospadias is a minor birth defect of the penis in boys. The urethra (the opening that lets urine pass out of the body) is located somewhere other than the tip of the penis. The most common location is on the underside of the penis, at some distance from the tip. Usually, hypospadias can be repaired by a fairly simple operation.

What is hypospadias?

Hypospadias is a congenital abnormality (present since birth) that occurs in about 1 in 250 newborn boys. The opening of the urethra is located away from the tip of the penis (called the *glans penis*), its normal location.

Hypospadias is usually mild and can be repaired by a fairly simple operation. If the opening is not far from the tip of the penis, surgery may not be needed. Surgery may be delayed until your child is 6 to 12 months old. After healing, there are usually no further problems related to hypospadias.

What does it look like?

- The opening of the urethra is found on the underside of the penis rather than at the tip. Hypospadias located near the scrotum (the sac containing the testicles) is less common and more severe.
- The abnormality is usually discovered during the physical examination after birth, or when it is noticed that urine doesn't flow from the tip of the penis.
- The penis may have an obvious curve (called *chordee*), and an abnormality of the foreskin may be present.
- Most boys with hypospadias have no other birth defects. However, some have other malformations, such as undescended testicle or inguinal hernia, which also require treatment. Additional malformations are more likely when hypospadias is located near the scrotum.

What causes hypospadias?

The cause of hypospadias is unknown.

What are some possible complications of hypospadias?

- Without surgery to correct hypospadias, it may lead to problems with urination or fertility.
- Surgery has a high success rate in correcting hypospadias. There is a low risk of complications after surgery.

What puts your child at risk of hypospadias?

If someone else in your family has had hypospadias, your child may be at higher risk. Otherwise, there are no known risk factors.

Can hypospadias be prevented?

There is no known way to prevent hypospadias. Surgery to repair the abnormality will avoid complications later in life.

How is hypospadias treated?

- After initial evaluation, your doctor will recommend a visit to an expert in treating hypospadias, usually a pediatric urologist (a specialist in urinary-tract diseases).
- Usually, no x-rays or other special tests are needed. If your child's hypospadias is found near the scrotum, tests for other abnormalities may be recommended.
- *Surgery* is the usual treatment for hypospadias.
- The surgeon may recommend waiting to perform the surgery until your son is 6 to 12 months old. This helps further reduce the small risks of anesthesia. Your child will receive anesthesia during the operation and medication to reduce pain afterward.
- If your child has hypospadias, circumcision (minor surgery to remove the foreskin of the penis) should be delayed, as the foreskin is often used in repairing the hypospadias.
- If hypospadias is located near the tip of the penis, the operation is simple. Success rates are high, and complications are few.
- If hypospadias is very mild—that is, if the opening is very near the tip of the penis—it may be possible to avoid surgery. The pediatric urologist can explain the advantages and disadvantages of performing or avoiding surgery in this situation.
- For more severe hypospadias, that is—if the opening is located near the scrotum—surgery is more complicated. Success rates are still high, but complications are somewhat more common.
- Any related abnormalities, such as abnormal curvature of the penis or an inguinal hernia, will probably be corrected during the same operation.
- Your child should heal quickly after surgery. Most boys have no further problems related to hypospadias.

 **When should I call your office?**

- Call your surgeon's office or our office if there are any signs of healing problems, infection (redness, tenderness,

fever), or abnormal urination after surgery for hypospadias.