ConvaTec

Exomphalos

What is exomphalos?

Exomphalos is a congenital (present at birth) malformation of the abdominal wall, in which abdominal contents protrude into a thin-walled sack outside the body. It occurs when the abdomen fails to close around the base of the umbilical cord during the early development of the foetus.

The exomphalos may be small, with only a portion of the bowel protruding outside the abdominal cavity, or it may be large, with most of the abdominal organs (intestine, liver and spleen) outside the abdominal cavity.

Babies born with exomphalos can often have abnormalities with other parts of the body, most commonly the spine, digestive system, heart, urinary system and limbs.

What is the cause of exomphalos?

The cause of exomphalos is unknown; it is not related to anything you may have done during your pregnancy.

Exomphalos is seen in 1 in 6,600 live births in England and Wales.[1]

How is exomphalos treated?

Treatment will depend on the size of the exomphalos. A small exomphalos can usually be repaired in a single operation. Surgery is generally performed shortly after birth to return the organs into the abdominal cavity and close the opening in the abdominal wall. The surgeons will also make a tummy button as this would have been absent.

A large exomphalos may require a staged repair. A silastic pouch (sterile pouch) will be placed over your baby's abdominal organs to contain and protect them. The pouch will be tightened regularly until all the abdominal organs are back inside the abdominal cavity, then the abdominal wall can be closed.

In a small number of cases it may be necessary to have formation of an ileostomy stoma.

Reference:

1. EUROCAT (the European Surveillance System for Congenital Anomalies) http://www.eurocat-network.eu/ @ 31.08.2010. Period covered 2000 - 2008 inclusive.

ConvaTec
Realise the possibilities™

PSNG
Paediatric Stom
Nurse Group