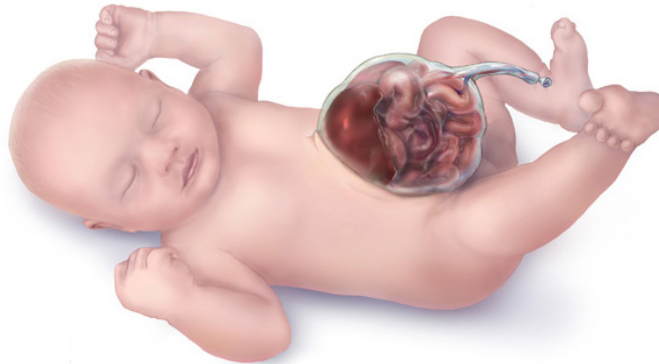


Omphalocele

What is it?

Omphalocele (pronounced uhm-fa-lo-seal) is a birth defect of the belly wall when the intestines, liver, and other organs come through the belly button and are exposed on the outside of the body, covered by a sac. The amount of intestines and other organs exposed can differ. Some babies may have only intestines exposed; other babies may have all the intestines, the liver, and other organs exposed. Normally, a small hole is present in the belly wall during a baby's development. This hole usually closes between weeks 6 and 10 of pregnancy. When this hole fails to close during pregnancy, an **omphalocele** can result. An omphalocele is similar to another birth defect called **gastroschisis**. Patients with an omphalocele usually have a thin layer of tissue called a **peritoneal sac** covering the exposed organs, while patients with gastroschisis do not have this protective covering.



Omphalocele

Image courtesy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

Because the intestines are outside the body, a baby with an omphalocele may have other problems. The belly might not grow to its normal size, other organs may be damaged, and infections may occur if the sac becomes broken. Babies with this condition also can have other birth defects, including genetic conditions, diaphragmatic hernia, and heart defects.

How common is it?

About 1 out of every 5,000 babies born each year has an omphalocele. That's about 775 babies a year in the United States.

What causes it?

The exact cause of omphaloceles is not known. Research has shown that pregnant women who drink alcohol or smoke more than a pack a day, take certain medications, or are obese were more likely to have a baby with an omphalocele. There may be many factors that cause it. More research is needed to understand all causes and risk factors.

How is it diagnosed?

It can be diagnosed during pregnancy or after birth. During pregnancy screening tests can check for birth defects and other conditions. After birth a physician will see it right away.

How is it treated?

It is usually treated by surgery. The surgeon will place the exposed intestines back into the belly and close the opening in the belly wall. If the defect is small, it might take only one surgery. If the defect is large, though, it may require multiple surgeries in stages. Your child's doctor will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/omphalocele.html>

Cincinnati Children's Hospital

<https://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/o/omphalocele>