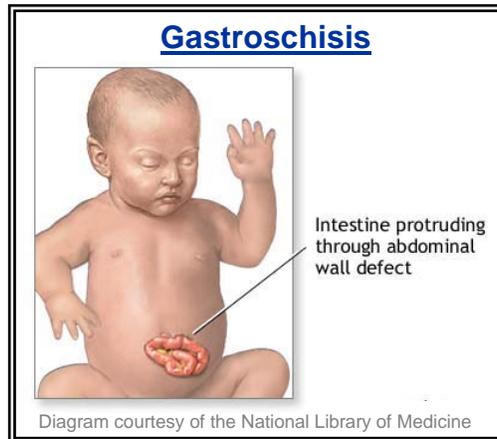


# Gastroschisis

## What is gastroschisis?

**Gastroschisis** is a birth defect that occurs when a hole is present in the **abdominal wall**. Typically, the opening in the abdomen is small and located to the right of the **umbilicus** (belly button or navel). The **abdominal contents** (such as the intestines or stomach) **herniate** (rupture or protrude) through the opening in the abdominal wall and are exposed on the outside of the body. The abdominal contents that are exposed outside the body may only include a small section of the intestines, or may include all of the intestines and the stomach.



Gastroschisis is similar to another birth defect called an **omphalocele**. Patients with an omphalocele usually have a **peritoneal sac** (thin layer of tissue) covering the exposed organs. **Patients with gastroschisis do not have this protective covering**, and therefore have an increased risk of infection.

Approximately 1 out of every 5,000 babies born each year have gastroschisis.

## What causes gastroschisis?

Currently, the exact cause of gastroschisis is not known. Younger mothers (under the age of 20) are more likely to have a child with gastroschisis.

Gastroschisis is usually an **isolated** birth defect, meaning that no other birth defects or abnormalities are seen. However, some children with gastroschisis may have additional birth defects, including **abnormalities of the intestines** (such as shorter intestines), **intrauterine growth retardation** (slow growth before birth), **prematurity**, or **cardiac** (heart) **problems**.

## How is gastroschisis treated?

Gastroschisis can be surgically corrected. The surgeon will place the exposed abdominal contents back into the abdomen and close the opening in the abdominal wall. Your child's doctor(s) will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

## For more information

**Children's Hospital of Boston** - <http://www.childrenshospital.org/az/Site944/mainpageS944P0.html>

**The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia** - <http://www.chop.edu/consumer/jsp/division/generic.jsp?id=81166>

**Cincinnati Children's Hospital** - <http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/health/info/abdomen/diagnose/gastroschisis.htm>

**Source:** Cincinnati Children's Hospital