

# My Hernia Operation

As told by Hans Hallanger

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*Please note that this story was transcribed from my podcast. Therefore, it is mostly me talking and the text will be a little shaky and not polished.*

Today I'm going to talk about my hernia operation. The reason I'm going to talk about it today is just so there's some information to help men get through this operation and understand it a little bit better.

I wasn't that satisfied in the last year finding anything to help me know what's going on. So, this is my attempt to help you understand the process a little bit. What to do before, what the day of the surgery is like, and what the recovery is like afterward.

So, I had been suffering with this hernia for a year or so at least. My doctor told me, after the surgery, he thought I might have had it for years. Of course I didn't know this. I didn't know I had a hernia since I've been young.

I had noticed it at least a year ago, I had the bulge below the belt line and then the hernia sometimes comes out into

your right testicle area and it gets very large and hard to move and it's big.

But it didn't really hurt so I didn't really do anything. In fact, the only reason I even went to the doctor at all, was last Saturday, a week ago, as I'm talking to you, I had had severe pain, on Saturday morning.

I had got up Saturday morning started my normal routine, drinking coffee, working on the internet, doing stuff with my computer and somewhere along the line it was just unbelievably painful. And it had never been this way.

It had never been painful. It had always been just been there.

I didn't worry about it, I worked around it. I didn't lift too heavily, most of the time I avoided over using it. But I didn't want to go in to the doctor.

I knew there would be a cost involved. I figured, well, wait another month, or wait another two months. I'll wait whatever it takes. I wanted to wait. I also had some insurance issues so I wanted to wait to accumulate more cash.

But, that Saturday, a week ago Saturday, was just so much pain. I went back, laid down on my bed thinking, well when you lay down, for long enough, the hernia usually goes back in.

But it was there for, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes, thirty minutes, and still wasn't going back in. And it was irritating me because here I am, this is my Saturday morning, this is the morning I enjoy the most, quietly doing things around the house especially my internet work.

And I was thinking, man this is not getting better at all. Am I going to die? Is it a strangulated hernia that I've read about on the internet? Are my bowels going to get cut off? Am I going to die? Is this it?

So I kind of was just waiting there, and then I finally called to my son and told him to get ready. You are going to have to take me to the emergency room.

So I gathered enough of my strength together to get out of bed, threw on some slippers, and a sweat shirt. I had him pull my jeep around to take me to the hospital.

He drove me to the emergency room which was about 25 minutes away. The ride was just agony of feeling every bump. By the time we got to the hospital I was just doubled over in pain and could barely walk to the check-in desk. They checked me in and told me to wait in the waiting room. I only had to wait about 5 minutes. They did see me right away.

It is critical that you know what emergency rooms you need to go to. This is one big tip. I had learned this about a

month ago, which emergency rooms my insurance will cover. So, learn that. That's a very important thing for a man to know, is what emergency rooms in your local area accept your insurance. So you do not want to do too much thinking, and calling your insurance when you're in an emergency.

So I went there, and I was checking in and I could hardly sit there. I was bent over and couldn't lift my head. And then, they took me right away, really. It didn't take long at all. It was a good deal.

The hospital isn't in an urban area filled with gunshot people and whacked out crazies. It's a suburban, nicey, nice place. So, that's a good tip too. Go to a hospital that's not filled with people who are getting shot up and the staff is just running around chaotically.

They took me in, but by the time I really got into the treatment room, I was starting to feel a little bit better. It was starting to kind of go away; it was starting to feel better. I was getting better.

So, at that point, the doctor came in and he did examine me and he said well you've got what they call a real man's hernia. It was very, very big in his opinion. And I knew that, I mean, it was a big hernia. Dragging that around, it's big. But, it was doable, that's what I've been doing.

So, then they gave me a cat scan where they inject some dye into you and you go back and forth in that machine, the cat scan machine. And it's not difficult at all; I don't have any allergies to medications or dyes or iodine, or anything. I don't have a bad heart, I hadn't been to the doctor in a decade and I'm in good shape in spite of being too heavy. I'm fat, and heavy, and big, but I am in good shape I don't take any medications, I don't have any allergies. I walk around and do what I want to do for the most part.

I just want to lose weight for my health, well, not for my health to look better, but I'm sure it would help my health and be able to do more of what I want to do.

But anyway, the CAT scan, they brought it back. They said, yes, you have a very, very large hole in your body and it's a hernia.

And we've talked to the surgeon that does these, we scanned the results to him, he has said that it is not life threatening, because it is a large hernia and the hernia can be pushed back in and it's going back in now. We've been pushing it back in. The strangulated hernia problem is when the hole is small and can get pinched and that is when you have the huge life threatening emergency.

So, in my case, they said, well, you don't have to have the operation today. It's not a dire emergency. And I was feeling

much better. They said, but what you should do, is stay on an all liquid diet, and this was Saturday, until Monday.

Call Monday morning, call the surgeon and beg for an appointment. The surgeon says he will see you on Monday, and perhaps you should plan on having the operation on Monday. So, that's where I was. He said stay on an all liquid diet.

So, on the way home I was feeling better, was feeling a little more spry. I finally had diagnoses from a doctor, I hadn't gone to the doctor, and this was on my list to do, go to the doctor to figure out what should be done.

So, I did that, and now I know what to do. So, we stopped at the gas station on the way home, and they said get milkshakes and soft foods, so I had my son run in there and get some of that type of products.

And then we made it home. I'm trying to think of the time, how long I was actually in the emergency room. Probably three hours or so. Probably three hours, you know how it is in a hospital. There's a lot of sitting around and waiting. You have to be able to sit around and wait at the hospital; they're not in there to hustle you in and out. There's a certain amount of waiting and waiting, and waiting. Which, you will just have to deal with it. I'm an impatient person, so I don't like to wait, but that's what you have to do.

So, anyway we got home, I had the milkshake and I just relaxed all the rest of the day. And I did as little as possible on Saturday and Sunday.

I went back to work on Monday morning. I start work at six-thirty, so I knew the surgeon's office probably wouldn't be open until eight. So then at eight, I called and begged the receptionist to give me an appointment and told her the story about how I was in the emergency room on Saturday and the doctors at the ER talked to your surgeon and he said I should come in on Monday.

So, I was able to get an appointment on Monday morning, late morning. So I worked another hour or two there at work, went home, actually, I didn't go home, I had made arrangements with my parents.

My parents came the day before, Sunday, to stay in the hotel nearby because I was figuring, well, that somebody would need to pick me up and maybe need some help to do this. So, you're going to need to have somebody to drive you away from an operation. It's very important. They're not going to let you drive yourself, and you're not going to be able to drive.

So, keep that in mind. So, I went to see the doctor, he saw me right away and said that you got a giant hernia, this here is what we can do, when do you want to do it? I said, if you can do it today, that would be fantastic. I said, I've got people here

to take care of me for a day or two. I can do it today, if we can do it today, let's do it today.

He said, go and see the receptionist, we'll see what we can do. The scheduling person, they said, well, yeah, three-fifty. This was about eleven o'clock this morning, she said, well, can you come back? We'll do it at three-fifty today there has been a cancelation. So, she said get to the hospital at one-twenty, the operation will be at three-fifty. Two and a half hours after that.

At about eleven-thirty, they said you got to put on this antiseptic goop on the incision site, first. I left, went home, took a shower, put on the antiseptic stuff on the incision site, that keeps down the infection.

And we just hustled back to the hospital. We checked in, and then you start waiting. You get in there and you go through all the waiting and you wait all afternoon. And they said you don't eat and don't drink.

Of course, I drink a ton of water a day, and a lot of coffee. So, I'm always fully hydrated. And by this time I was just dying of thirst. So, all afternoon I had nothing to drink and nothing to eat. So you're going to deal with your thirst if you drink a lot of water as you should.

Then finally, things started happening. Right at three-fifty, when they said, the anesthesiologist came in and talked to me

and said I'm going to be put under. And they ask you all kinds of questions.

Then the nursing assistant came in and said this is what's going to happen.

And the doctor came in and said, well, we're going to fix you up.

Then they finally came and wheeled me in, we're in the white room, the next thing I know, I'm waking up in the recovery room, I'm grogged up. It wasn't that long. It didn't hurt at all. I didn't have any pain at all during or immediately after.

Then, we got back to our waiting room. Then, yes, hours afterwards at the hospital recovery room were the most uncomfortable. They were the worst.

The bed that I was in was just horrible. It was about the most uncomfortable bed I've ever been in in my life. It was about one inch thick and I could not be comfortable at all. So, it was very unpleasant. It was almost like a torture chamber being in that bed. I was complaining about it to my parents and the nurse.

They probably thought, man, what a clown. You got to complain about a bed. It just seems like a simple thing. Plus, I

had my glasses on and the stuff on the wall, I couldn't read anything. Everything was tiny writing.

So, I was really crabby afterwards. Then, they give you some water, and they give you a Jello. But everything is in tiny, tiny quantities.

The water was like a plastic cup, mostly ice. So, just a squirt of water. So I sucked on the water, and in an instant, the nurse had left before she could fill it up again. And, I was dying of thirst.

So, I kept having my mom fill up this water and I was drinking like a fiend. My parents don't drink any water, so seeing me guzzle this water they are probably thinking what's wrong with this guy?

But I was thirsty! I hadn't drank anything in like seven or eight hours. So, I was dying of thirst. And, you know how it is when a cup is filled with ice water, chopped ice, there's no room for actual water.

So, I was really uncomfortable, really uncomfortable. And they finally come in with this Jello, and I horsed that down. I was dying of hunger. I hadn't eaten a real meal since Friday and this was Monday night.

Alright, so, I got the Jello. I said, can I have another Jello? Finally they gave me four Jellos. So, I ate the Jellos. It kind of helped. I was drinking water.

Of course, at some point, that water started kicking in and I really had to go to the bathroom. So, the nurses were able to get me up, I walked to the bathroom. It was hard to get up. You know, you're really weak after your operation, hard to get up, very difficult. So, I made it there, went to the bathroom. That worked, to pee, it didn't hurt to pee at all. I did take a look at the surgery site in the mirror and it looked good at that time. There was a big scar but not the protruding bulge I was used to seeing for the last year.

Then, I went back to bed. And then, you just start waiting. They give you stuff, the IVs, the pain pump, and pills. I waited, and had to pass a certain number of tests.

One was being able to go to the bathroom, one was having the pain under control, having your blood pressure not be too high, and a few other things. And, being able to walk.

So, finally I was able to walk with the nurse down the hall.

But the only problem I had was my blood pressure was way too high, so they gave me some sort of a pill, that after a half an hour it made the blood pressure lower.

This waiting to go home was just agony for me. The seconds were ticking by like hours. And the bed was so unbearably uncomfortable. I was just dreaming of my comfortable recliner, and my comfortable bed, and my comfortable couch with the foot rests.

I sat there in misery knowing that anything would be better than sitting in this blasted uncomfortable hospital bed. But they wouldn't let me go until my blood pressure would lower. Thankfully, it finally did. I finally went home.

I was in my dad's car, and he's got a little car, and it's really uncomfortable. You feel every bump. But, we made it home. So, you might want to think about having a good comfortable car to ride home in. A big car, with comfortable seats with shock absorbers.

I made it home, finally, ten-o'clock that night. The kids were there. I was able to pretty much go right to bed. Of course, the kids were up still, frogging around and my parents were there. I was just so tired and wanting to go to bed.

Usually, when I close my bedroom door, I don't hear anything and I don't mind if people are up and about, because I don't hear anything. But I wanted to keep the door open in case I needed to call my kids, if I fall or if I need help.

So, I was really crabby that night. I think you will find that you're going to be really crabby. People are going to say, wow, you just had an operation, he should be feeling good!

And you're not going to feel good; you're going to feel terrible. The hernia itself was fixed, that didn't hurt, but every other part of you hurts. You've been in an uncomfortable situation all day for many hours. Your body is all out of whack. You're going to be uncomfortable and you're going to be crabby. Any little sound will irritate you.

So, I was just complaining, you guys, get to bed. Telling my kids, get to bed, get to bed. Of course, they're crabbed out too now by this time. You know, why is this old geezer giving us such a hard time, shouldn't he be nicer?

So, finally, I made it through the night. Not very well, though, I was getting up every two hours to go to the bathroom. And getting out of bed is very hard, very difficult. My shoulders were feeling better, but you're going to use your upper body to get yourself out of bed. Getting out of bed that first night was just so difficult.

And you're going to be afraid you're going to wreck your new operation. So, getting up, you don't just pop out of bed. You kind of have to think about it. So, with all that water, I had to get out of bed like four times that night.

So, I'd only sleep for an hour and a half, get up, go to the bathroom, stagger in there, go to the bathroom, and go back to bed.

And the whole process of getting back in is uncomfortable. So, the first night is going to be really, really rough. Really, really rough.

What they give you is this pain pump, which is a catheter that pumps into the surgery area that goes off every hour to try and relieve the pain. It's a little pump that sits by your side. Of course, the first night, the darn thing kind of nearly pulled out.

So, I thought, oh gosh, now what. But it didn't go out all the way, so I figured, well it's probably okay.

So, the next day, Tuesday, I was feeling a little better. My mom had brought some eggs from the hotel, and some yogurts. The first thing I did was get up and make some coffee, to kind of get back to my normal routine.

You know, I wasn't that chipper, but I made the coffee. The kids got off to school okay. My parents were there and they kind of hung around. Well, actually they didn't. They took all my laundry to the laundry mat and did it.

So, they were gone most of the morning. I was just kind of sitting in my comfortable couch. That was working. You have to find a way to be comfortable that first day after. So, you need

to find a way to really be comfortable. You're going to want to wear easy, soft clothing. And stuff you can easily pull down to go to the bathroom.

The other thing is, you're not going to have any bowel movements. That's a big problem. The only pain medication I had was this pain pump that is a catheter attached to the surgery area And I was taking ibuprofen.

So, my parents had gotten the ibuprofen that morning. So, I started taking that. Two pills every meal and at night. But I wasn't feeling that bad. I was able to get up, move around a few minutes, and go and sit down and relax.

I really wasn't that hungry, just a little bit hungry. I would drink a little coffee and a little water. So, that was Tuesday. My parents made a meal and put it in the oven for Tuesday night for me and the kids. But then they left and went home Tuesday afternoon. I was feeling a little better Tuesday evening. I went to bed at six-thirty Tuesday night.

I slept until, like, eleven-thirty at night. Got up, went to the bathroom, had some more ibuprofen and some water.

Then I sat in the corner of the couch with the footrest up and the seat up. Then I was able to sleep until three in the morning on the couch.

I got up at three, went to the bathroom. Then, from three until about seven am I slept in the bed again. So, I was starting to sleep a little bit better the second night.

Then, Wednesday, I was feeling much improved. Still I didn't do much, but that's about it. On Wednesday, I was moving around a little bit, eating a tiny bit more, drinking plenty of water and a little bit of coffee.

I still hadn't gone to the bathroom for a bowel movement on Wednesday. I had my son get a stool softener that night or Wednesday afternoon. I think I went to the bathroom, finally, Thursday morning a little bit.

So, it took many days before you go to the bathroom. That part, having a bowel movement, still isn't back to the normal. So, I'm still taking these stool softeners, trying to get back to normal.

Thursday, I was much improved. I was able to do a lot of things. I didn't go to work on Thursday. I didn't go to work Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

Thursday, though, I went out in my car and I went on numerous errands, kind of small errands. To see if I could get out of the car.

I wanted to see if I could make it somewhere, do some things. Like, go to the post office, get some stamps, go to the

grocery store, get a little bit of food, small bag. Go to the store, Wal-Mart, get a few minor supplies. I was doing things like that, where I would go and do a couple of errands, come home, sit down, rest.

I found that kind of got me going. It was something fun. I didn't feel like doing any computer work, I didn't feel like reading, I didn't feel like doing much. I was on the internet, just kind of looking at videos and listening and watching rather than reading. So, that's probably going to be what it's going to be like for you. You're not going to be like a ball of fire right afterwards.

But then Friday, Friday morning, I went back to work. At the normal early morning, six-thirty. And was happy to kind of get into it again.

I didn't work all day, I worked until eleven. Just to get started with it. But I feel like I am mostly back to normal. Now, I'm having to watch it now.

Thursday night, Friday night I slept very well. I did not get up to go to the bathroom. Again, I'm forty-eight, in good health for the most part. So, that has been my experience.

Saturday morning, I finally feel like doing on of these podcasts to kind of explain the situation to you. What it's like

for me. It may be different for you, but that's kind of what you going to have to expect.

If you have a hernia, go in to see your doctor, get that thing fixed. It doesn't heal on its own. It limits you. You can't lift that much with a hernia. You can't walk around that well. It's uncomfortable. It can be embarrassing at times, because it's a big bulge in your pants, basically.

And you'll see this with old men with a hernia; they'll have this big giant bulge there. And, that's what it is. So, this is what you want to try and get fixed. The operation, for me, they put a mesh in there. That didn't hurt at all. I'm feeling really, really good. Everything is kind of coming back together. I'm really happy I did it. Really happy everything worked out.

It's just that, the day of, there's a ton of waiting. But it's not that bad of a wait. I think it's immediately after the surgery, when the anesthesia is wearing off and then before you go home, and the first night is the worst.

So, that's what I would say you should keep in mind. Is that, immediately afterwards, and then the next ten to twelve hours afterwards are going to be the worst. And this is probably like any surgery; it's going to be the worst time for you. And that probably is going to scare you, but I wouldn't let that stop you from getting it taken care of.

My whole life has just taken a rapid increase for the better. And this can happen for you if you go through with it.

So, that's all for now. Thank you.

This was Hans Hallanger at  
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