

# Intestinal Atresia Care

## What is an intestinal atresia?

Intestinal atresia is a birth defect in which the intestine is blocked or not connected. When an atresia occurs, milk cannot be absorbed. The exact cause of intestinal atresia is unknown. It is thought to be related to poor blood flow to the intestines during development. One early sign is too much amniotic fluid seen on ultrasounds. The exact site of an atresia is usually not known until further testing is done after birth. An atresia will require surgery shortly after birth.

## Delivery

It is usually safe to have a vaginal delivery. Your doctor will decide if there is a reason for a C-section.

## After your baby is born

Babies with atresia will have trouble eating. The signs are usually vomiting, stomach bloating and no bowel movements. An x-ray is often done to make a diagnosis. A special contrast x-ray can also be done to see more details of the intestinal tract. A tube will be inserted through your baby's mouth into the stomach to allow the pressure to be relieved. Fluids will be given through an IV to ensure your baby stays hydrated.

## Treatment

The type of surgery is based on the location and type of atresia(s). The surgeon will remove abnormal section(s) of the intestine. If it is safe for your baby, the surgeon will reconnect the intestine to allow for normal flow. In some cases, the intestine needs time to heal before the connections are made, so a stoma is created. A stoma is a link between the intestine and the belly wall that allows the baby's stool to go into a bag for a short period of time. If a stoma is required, a second operation will be needed to reconnect the intestines.

## After surgery

Nutrition will be provided through an IV until your baby is able to eat. If you plan to breast feed, milk can be pumped and stored during this time.

## Hospital stay

The usual stay is several weeks. Some babies take less time. Others require more. Your baby needs to be gaining weight well before going home.

## Our pediatric surgeons



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