



Who cured it better: doctors or Amazon?

The curious case of a belly button hernia, multiple doctors, and Amazon

In March of this year we welcomed a beautiful new addition to our family: Baby Miles. We instantly fell in love with our new little guy and enjoyed every moment together as an expanded family. Even our eldest daughter, Maizey, took well to being a big sister. Life never felt more complete.

As we brought Miles home and his umbilical cord fell away we started to notice his obvious “outie” belly button. It wasn’t a big deal at all; we knew that most babies grow out of their “outies” as they gain weight and grow bigger. But after a few weeks, we noticed it getting bigger and bigger. It started to balloon to the point that it protruded about an inch from his stomach. When he was calm we could push it back in, but as most babies do, when he cried, it stuck up and became firm like another appendage and we could not push it back inside his torso. Internet searches quickly diagnosed this as an **“umbilical hernia”** (aka “naval hernia” or “belly button hernia”) and it turns out it is one of the most common types of hernia. We dove into medical articles and learned it was extremely common in babies and generally nothing to worry about.

Try telling a parent not worry... *I dare you!*

We called the pediatrician and quickly got ahold of the nurse practitioner on call who assured us it was normal and not to worry. She told us stories of hundreds of babies with this condition and reassured us it would go away in the coming months. We even sent her a photo to share with Miles' doctor, who took one look and said, "Oh, this is nothing. It will heal and go away with time." The nurse practitioner and doctor both explained what we had already read in our research: the hernia was caused by a small hole in the stomach muscles that had not yet closed and fluid and intestines were breaching through that hole, making its way into the belly button cavity when Miles strained. It sounded scary but they repeatedly assured us it was fine, normal, and would go away. We were relieved to hear the official diagnosis from medical professionals so we went back to the regularly scheduled midnight feedings, naps and diaper changing routine.

The second, surgical opinion

Time went on and the bulging hernia seemed to grow. We especially noticed it when Miles cried or strained but we tried not to think about it and remembered the explanations from our pediatrician and nurse. But the hernia grew and grew, eventually stretching two inches from tummy to tip!

Enough was enough; we had to do something. We needed a second opinion so we called back our pediatrician and got a referral for a surgeon specializing in infant abdominal hernia. We hurriedly packed Miles up for a consult and anxiously awaited the verdict from the surgeon.



We arrived at the hospital and after three minutes of examining Miles, the surgeon echoed all the same comments as the pediatrician and the nurse. In fact, the surgeon even stated that, were he to operate, umbilical hernia surgery adds unnecessary risks and the potential for complications down the line. He said there is nothing we could do and to just monitor it over time.

The surgeon then said something that stuck with me: he jokingly mentioned an “old wives’ tale” whereby you push in the hernia and tape a quarter over it to keep it contained. He told us it doesn’t work and it only leads to the potential for rashes and skin irritation from a dirty quarter and tape adhesive. I chuckled and tucked it away in the bowels of my brain.

We took Miles home and I called my mother to tell her how the appointment went. Like all concerned grandmas she enlisted the full power of the Internet to research causes, cures and home remedies. She asked me the same questions I asked the surgeon and I told her what he told me: “there’s nothing we can do and we just need to wait and monitor it over time.”

So we did...

A “snake oil” cure?

A few hours later my mom called me and told me she was speaking with one of her friends who had the same type of hernia with one of her children. Her friend bought a little baby-sized soft belly band that kept the hernia contained in the baby’s tummy while the stomach muscles healed. I quickly recalled the quarter and tape wives’ tale remedy and told my mom it wouldn’t work. But she persisted and told me to search online and see if I could find this little miracle baby belt. So I took to Google and Amazon and quickly

uncovered a world of baby belly button hernia belts. I couldn't believe what I saw! Would these even work? Were they just silly "old wives' tales"? Who was right: the Internet or the multiple medical professionals with whom we had already consulted?



I clicked a few of the products and read through the reviews. One **product in particular stood out** because the reviews basically told the same story line we were living with baby Miles:

Medical Grade CHILD UMBILICAL
HERNIA Belt, Infant Abdominal Binder,
Baby Navel Truss Support

★★★★☆ ~ 377

\$14²⁹

✓prime FREE One-Day. Get it Tomorrow, Jul
14

More Buying Choices
\$13.49 (3 new offers)

- baby has scary looking hernia
- parents consult doctor
- doctor tells parents there's nothing they can do
- parents refuse to believe the doctor and consult family, friends, and the internet

The reviews go on to complete a very different story:

- parents stumble across this product or are referred to the product through friends or family
- parents purchase it and use it on baby

- product works like a charm and heals hernia in 6-8 weeks with regular use

Could it be true? Does it really work? Would the Internet and Amazon's recommendations really win out over trained and experienced medical professionals?

I figured we had nothing to lose since there was technically "nothing we could do," so I added it to my cart and gave it a try.

The old wives' tale clinical trial

We received the device and we immediately started using it. I was concerned it would irritate, upset or hurt Miles – the last thing I wanted to do was cause him any discomfort or pain – but he did not seem to mind it at all. In fact, he really didn't even notice it. We didn't observe any difference in behavior when he was wearing the belt, so we kept using it. We'd press in the protruding hernia when Miles was calm, align the little firm fabric covered plastic piece, and Velcro the belt into place. It stayed in place for most of the day but we'd check on it periodically to ensure alignment over the belly button area.

After a week of regular use, we started seeing the protrusion reduce in size but it still stuck out when he cried and strained. After two weeks, it was significantly reduced in size by approximately half. Three weeks went by and it was almost gone except for the occasional small protrusion, and by the fourth week it was barely visible. We kept using it for a couple additional weeks just to be sure it had adequate time to heal, but after that point, there was no sign of the hernia at all; even when Miles cried or strained. He didn't exactly have an "innie" but it looked unremarkably normal.

The result: it worked. It was amazing.

Doctoring in the digital age

Now, of course my mother and her friend are owed much of the credit for suggesting the idea, but I would

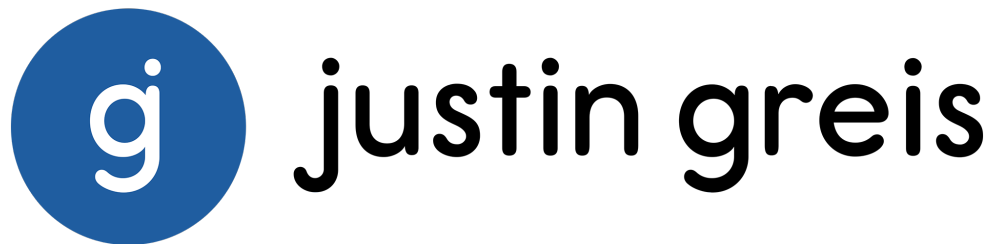
not have been comfortable taking the recommendation had it not been for the advice I received from some basic searching, and most of all, from Amazon and the stories shared in the product reviews.

This experience highlighted for me a few very poignant lessons learned in this digital age:

1. *Sometimes "old wives' tales" are true.* Although we didn't tape a quarter to his tummy, we did buy a device that essentially served the same function. Old advice shouldn't be summarily dismissed. There may be some truth to those time-tested cures.
2. *Doctors are not wizards.* I have incredible respect for doctors and the entire medical community but it is an unreasonable expectation that they know every disease, have every cure, or understand every advance in technology (or know every product on Amazon). Being a vigilant patient/parent and advocating for your own care (or the care of those under your care) is a necessity these days.
3. *Information is power.* There is a tremendous amount of information out there; sometimes you just need to look it up. It has never been easier to get your hands on proven solutions to problems if you only ask the question and look in the right place.

While I remain skeptical of miracle claims and cures on the Internet, this experience has been eye-opening for us as a family. This is by no means a condemnation of, or replacement for, a doctor's visit; rather, an endorsement for arming yourself with information before and after that visit. Sometimes the Internet does have the answer if you take the time to look for it.

I hope this story helps you if your little one is in need of a cure for his/her belly button hernia!



hi, i'm justin
(nice to meet you)

I post weekly **professional insights** and **personal stories** from my life as a management consultant, a dad, and an eternal optimist.



Click here to learn more about my **professional, personal,** and **“perfeSSIONal”** background.

connect with me

- [Visit JustinGreis.com](#)
- [Learn more about Justin](#)
- [Subscribe to newsletter](#)
- [Contact Justin](#)