

Dr. George Swope Munday:

My name is Dr. George Swope Munday. I'm the member of Central Kentucky Surgeons at Ephraim McDowell Regional Medical Center. I specialize in general surgery and my specialty areas within general surgery are hernia care and robotic surgery. Screening for hernias is important because hernias can be a life-threatening condition. A hernia is a hole in the abdominal wall, and if that hole in the abdominal wall gets large enough, a piece of bowel can become trapped and become strangulated, and this can lead to an emergency situation and can potentially be life-threatening. By screening ahead of time and coming in to have areas checked out before they become emergencies, allows us to repair these areas before they become a life-threatening issue.

Screening for a hernia should be reserved for folks that have symptoms that coincide with a hernia. Like I said, the most general symptom of a hernia is a bulge somewhere in the abdominal wall. The most common places for this are in the inguinal region at the belly button or at any old incision for previous surgery. For hiatal hernias or paraesophageal hernias, these symptoms don't present as a bulge, but can be heartburn, reflux, or trouble swallowing. So, the screening day, we're doing this as a community outreach program. We want people to be able to have access to health care and want them to be able to come in and ask questions and be screened in an environment that is open and accepting.

On the day of, I will be there, the hernia screening, as well as some other partners. We'll have a short discussion at the beginning of the day, talking a little bit about hernia and what it means to have a hernia repaired. We'll also have the intuitive robots set up in the lobby so that if you want to get a hands-on experience with it and try some virtual reality sessions with the robotic system, you'll be able to do that. Once we have our initial meet and greet time, we'll have patients file back and we'll have exam rooms set up and we'll actually have a physician do an exam on you to see if you do have a hernia. If we found a hernia, we'll have you be able to get set up with an office appointment. And from that office appointment, we'll be able to get you set up for surgery.

So, for the hernia screening, generally, physical exam is sensitive enough to tell if you have a hernia or not. There is one special instance with hiatal hernias, if you do have the proper symptoms, we might need to schedule an endoscopy where we look with a lighted scope down into the stomach to tell if there's a hernia. Otherwise, if it's not a hiatal hernia, we'll be able to tell you that day whether you have a hernia and also be able to tell if you would be a candidate for surgery or not. The upcoming screening is free to the public. We hope to just have this as an outreach to the community and be able to provide access to medical care for maybe folks that don't have a primary care doctor or for folks that maybe are embarrassed to ask these questions to their primary care doctor.