

### UNBUTTONED

# Fix is in for the Heat's hernia specialist

If ever there was a mysterious injury to Average Joe, it's a hernia. There's the popping and protruding, the tearing and slipping. And yet most guys only know that hernias are occasionally fodder for stand-up comedians and they really hurt. Enter Dr. David Edelman, the general surgeon for the Miami Heat, director of the Laparoscopic Center of Miami at Baptist Hospital and a hernia guru. Edelman knows hernias like Shaq knows blocked shots. Even better, he's come up with a new way to fix 'em. Think you've got a hernia or the makings of one? Read on. Dr. David Edelman gets Unbuttoned with James H. Burnett III.

**JB:** OK, I'm going to assume I'm not the only person out there who doesn't know exactly what a hernia is. The best description I've ever heard came from an old Bill Cosby stand-up routine. Help

me out.

**DE:** There's many types of hernias out there. Most people have these big lumps in their lower abdomen, down in the groin. It is essentially a rupture in the wall of the tissue that normally contains an organ or muscle.

**JB:** Thanks. I wasn't kidding. My dad had hernia surgery a year or so ago, and I swear I didn't fully get what had happened to him. Now that I know, what's this about you guys using screen — I'm thinking porch screen-like stuff — to fix hernias?

**DE:** Most of the times they'll use fiberglass or mesh to repair that muscle defect, and a woven fishing line called Prolene mesh.

**JB:** "They." You use something different, pig parts, no?

**DE:** Yes, I've been using a biological material made from pig intestine.

**JB:** I'm thinking Island of Dr. Moreau. But I know you're



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not experimenting on anyone. So how exactly does the pig/human thing work?

**DE:** The material is treated in the lab by the company, Cook Biotech. They take everything out of it related to pig, using chemicals to strip the traces of pig, and they leave a matrix, a screen left behind that's made of collagen, which is a normal tissue in the human body.

**JB:** I don't suppose you can do a little name-dropping of the star athletes you've worked on?

**DE:** No, I can't — medical privacy law. But I started using this material on professional athletes, because they're a unique breed of people and can do things with their bodies that you and I

can't.

**JB:** Like what? And how are their abilities affected by this material?

**DE:** If I put a piece of fiberglass into Dwyane Wade's body, he'd feel it. It wouldn't feel the same as his normal parts. He wouldn't be able to jump 20 feet in the air. Maybe he'd only be able to jump 19 feet in the air. In bio tests, the athletes I've treated have responded favorably to the pig material, and after three or four months the tissue was replaced naturally by human tissue from their own bodies. It has a more natural feel.

**JB:** What's the biggest cause of hernias?

**DE:** Most of the time it's a genetic thing that you just develop over time because the human body is not perfect, and because man was not meant to stand upright. That creates a certain type of strain on the abdomen.

**JB:** So how was man meant

to stand?

**DE:** Theoretically, it would be more on all fours. We've evolved to an upright position.

**JB:** Where's the technology going with this kind of surgery, and what's your best hernia-prevention advice?

**DE:** I'm starting to use biologic glues to fix the screen in place. We're using different biologic glues. As for the technology, Star Trek is not that far off. It wouldn't surprise me if within the next 100 years we have something like the Tricorder used in Star Trek that can be waved like a wand over an injury and heal it. And my best advice is that we're not all athletes though we all want to be. So if you have pain in your groin, see someone who's qualified to treat it.

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