

# Laparoscopic Gallbladder Removal (Cholecystectomy)

## Discharge Instructions

## General Information

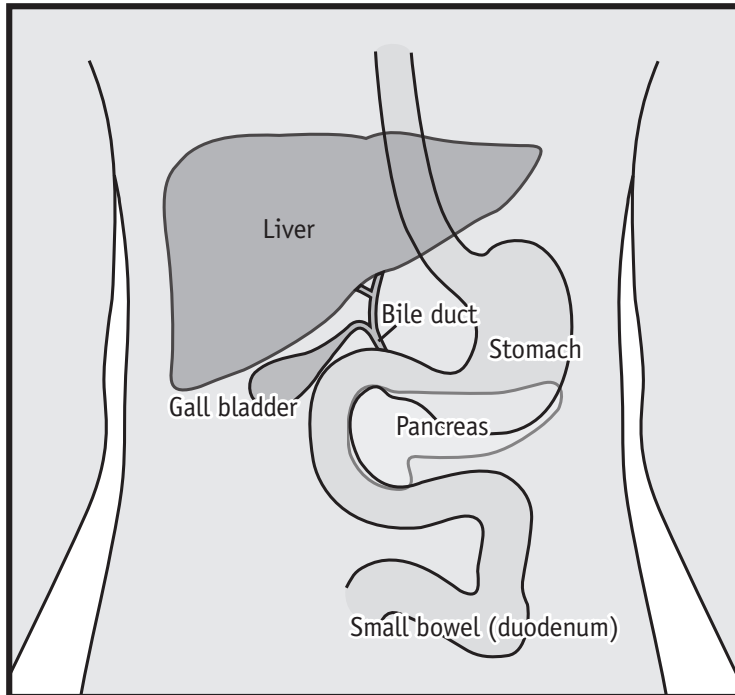
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A gallbladder is a pear-shaped organ located below the liver that stores bile made in the liver. When food enters the mouth, the gallbladder sends bile through the bile ducts into the intestines to help with fat digestion. Once your gallbladder is removed, your bile flows directly from your liver to the intestines.

To remove the gallbladder, a thin telescope is used to view the gallbladder on a TV screen. This scope is inserted through a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch cut into your abdomen. Carbon dioxide gas is then put into your abdomen to help the surgeon see your organs. Surgical instruments are inserted through the other small incisions and the gallbladder is removed.

After your surgery, you will stay in the hospital for approximately 2–4 hours. You will be able to go home when you are medically stable, pain is tolerable, and you can walk.

We highly recommend you have someone stay with you for the first night after your surgery.



## Diet

- Depending on how you feel when you get home, we suggest fluids or a light diet on the first night. The day after surgery, you may drink or eat what you want.
- A well-balanced diet is important for wound healing.
- Some pain medication will cause constipation. To prevent constipation eat fruit, vegetables and whole grains. You may also take a mild laxative such as Docusate (available from your pharmacist).
- Drink plenty of fluids (unless you have kidney failure or heart disease—discuss this with your doctor).

## Pain

- Take the pain medications on a regular basis as prescribed by your surgeon. Most pain medicines work best if you take them before the pain becomes too strong.
- You may use Advil in addition to your pain medication.
- If you find that you only have pain when doing certain activities, such as walking, bathing, or changing dressings, take the pain medicine about 30 minutes before the activity.
- As your pain becomes less, you may take less of the prescribed medication and substitute plain Tylenol or Advil.
- You may have some shoulder and neck pain after a laparoscopic surgery. This is due to the carbon dioxide and decreases over time.
- Do not take aspirin for pain as it may cause bleeding. If your pain worsens or does not improve, call your surgeon.

## Activities

- Light exercise such as walking helps you recover. As you feel stronger, you are able to take longer walks and increase your activity level.
- Avoid heavy lifting for \_\_\_\_\_ days.
- Each person recovers differently so check with your surgeon about your activity level. In most cases, you can return to normal activity and go back to work as soon as you feel ready.

## Passing Urine

- If you are unable to pass your urine and you have pain in your bladder:
  - put warm washcloths on your lower stomach
  - pour lukewarm water over your genitals to allow your body to relax and let the urine come out
- Avoid getting your dressing wet.
- Do not push or strain.

## Dressings

You will have 4 small incisions on your abdomen.

Your incisions may be covered in the following way:

- Open to air and held together with small tapes (steri-strips), stitches or staples. These incisions may be covered with small gauze dressings.
- Change the gauze dressings if they get wet, or soiled with drainage, using a similar light gauze dressing that you can buy at any drug store.
- You can remove the gauze dressings in 2–3 days. If there is still any drainage from the incisions, replace with a new dressing or bandaid.
- If you have small tapes (steri-strips) on your incisions, leave them on until they fall off (or as otherwise ordered by your surgeon). You may use band-aids if your clothing rubs.
- If the small tapes fall off, there is no need to replace them.
- Your surgeon or family doctor will remove any stitches or staples at your follow-up visit.

## Showering

- If the incisions are dry, you may take a shower 24–48 hours after your operation. Gently pat the wound areas with a towel.
- **Do NOT take a bath** or soak the incisions. Sponge bath as needed.

## Follow up Appointment

Contact your surgeon's office the day after surgery for a follow-up appointment.

## Call your surgeon or go to Emergency if any of the following occurs:

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- Chills, fever, a temperature more than 38.5°C (101.3°F).
- Wound drainage has stopped, then starts again.
- There is a noticeable change in the type of drainage (bright bleeding or bad-smelling).
- Increased redness and/or heat around the wounds.
- You cannot stop being sick to your stomach (vomiting) or you are not able to drink anything for 24 hours because you feel too sick.
- Increased or constant pain that is not relieved by prescribed pain medication.
- You have pain, aching or redness in your calves and/or swelling of the leg.
- You are unable to pass urine for more than 8 to 10 hours even though you are drinking fluids.

## Call 911 or other emergency services if you:

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- Have shortness of breath or chest pain (unusual for you).
- Have intense pain in your stomach, mid-back, or side.
- Feel your stomach is bloated and firm and you can feel a lump in your stomach.
- Feel your heart is beating very fast and you feel like passing out.
- Feel very restless for no reason and your skin is pale and clammy.
- Have numbness, tingling or no feeling in your legs.

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