

Laparoscopic Removal of Your Gallbladder

Larposcopic versus traditional surgery

The surgery to remove the gallbladder is called a *cholecystectomy* (pronounced chol-e-cys-tec-to-my). With traditional surgery, the gallbladder is removed through a 5- to 8-inch long *incision*, or cut, in your abdomen. The cut is made just below your ribs on the right side and goes to just below your waist. This is called *open cholecystectomy*.

A newer way to remove the gallbladder is called *laparoscopic cholecystectomy*. With this surgery a laparoscope (an instrument used to see the inside of your body) is used to remove the gallbladder. Several small incisions are used rather than one large incision.

How is a laparoscope used to remove the gallbladder?

A *laparoscope* is a small, thin tube that is put into your body through a tiny cut made just below your navel. Your surgeon can then see your gallbladder on a television screen and do the surgery with tools inserted in three other small cuts made in the right upper part of your abdomen. Your gallbladder is then taken out through one of the incisions.

What are the benefits of this type of surgery?

With laparoscopic cholecystectomy, you may return to work sooner, have less pain after surgery, and have a shorter hospital stay and a shorter recovery time. Surgery to remove the gallbladder with a laparoscope does not require that the muscles of your abdomen be cut, as they are in open surgery. The incision is much smaller, which makes recovery quick.

With laparoscopic cholecystectomy, you probably will only have to stay in the hospital overnight. With open cholecystectomy, you would have to stay in the hospital for about five days. Because the incisions are smaller with laparoscopic cholecystectomy, there isn't as much pain after this operation as after open cholecystectomy.

Who shouldn't have this type of surgery?

If you have previously had surgery in the area of your gallbladder, if you tend to bleed a lot or if you have any problem that would make it hard for your doctor to see your gallbladder, an open surgery may be better for you. Your doctor will decide which type of surgery is best for you.

What are the complications?

Complications are rare but may include bleeding, infection and injury to the duct (tube) that carries bile from your gallbladder to your stomach. Also, during laparoscopic cholecystectomy, the intestines or major blood vessels may be injured when the instruments are inserted into the abdomen. Remember, all of these complications are rare.

This handout provides a general overview on this topic and may not apply to everyone. To find out if this handout applies to you and to get more information on this subject, talk to your family doctor.



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