



Patient Information Sheet: Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy

Introduction

This information sheet is designed to provide you with details about laparoscopic cholecystectomy, an operation to remove your gallbladder. It aims to help you understand the procedure, its benefits and risks, and what you can expect before and after surgery. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to discuss them with your healthcare team.

What is the Gallbladder?

The gallbladder is a small, pear-shaped organ located under the liver. It stores bile, a digestive fluid produced by the liver that helps break down fats. When you eat, your gallbladder releases bile into the small intestine.

In some people, gallstones form inside the gallbladder, which can cause pain, infection, and other serious complications.

What is a Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy?

Laparoscopic cholecystectomy is a keyhole surgery to remove the gallbladder. It is performed using several small incisions rather than a single large one. A camera (laparoscope) and surgical instruments are inserted through these incisions to carefully remove the gallbladder.

Why is it Needed?

The most common reason for removing the gallbladder is the presence of gallstones, which can block bile ducts, causing pain, inflammation (cholecystitis), and infection. The surgery may also be recommended for other gallbladder conditions such as polyps or sludge that cause similar symptoms.

The Benefits of Surgery

- Relieves symptoms of gallbladder disease such as pain, bloating, and nausea.
- Prevents future episodes of gallbladder attacks and complications like infection or pancreatitis.
- Performed laparoscopically, it typically involves less post-operative pain, quicker recovery, and smaller scars than open surgery.
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What are the Risks?

Like all surgeries, laparoscopic cholecystectomy carries some risks. These include:

- **Infection:** At the incision sites or internally.
- **Bleeding:** This is usually minimal but may require additional treatment in rare cases.



- **Bile duct injury:** This is a rare but serious complication of laparoscopic cholecystectomy (1 in 500). Usually this will require further intervention or surgery, and an opinion from a tertiary biliary unit.
- **Injury to other nearby structures:** Such as the intestines, or blood vessels. This is uncommon but may require further surgery.
- **Bile leakage:** This may occur if bile leaks from the liver or bile ducts after surgery.
- **Conversion to open surgery:** In some cases, the surgeon may need to convert to open surgery if complications arise.
- **Blood clots (DVT):** This is a risk in any surgery but is minimized by early mobilization and blood-thinning medications.
- **Anaesthetic risks:** These include reactions to medications, although modern anaesthesia is very safe.

Before Surgery

Your surgeon will provide you with instructions on how to prepare for the procedure. You may be asked to stop certain medications or follow a specific diet. It's important to arrive on time and follow any fasting instructions provided.

What to Expect on the Day of Surgery

On the day of your surgery, you will be admitted to the hospital and met by your surgical and anaesthetic teams. They will review the procedure with you and answer any last-minute questions. You'll be asked to change into a hospital gown, and a nurse will perform routine checks such as blood pressure and temperature. A small cannula will be inserted into a vein in your hand or arm to administer fluids and medications. Once in the operating theatre, you will be given a general anaesthetic to ensure you are asleep and comfortable throughout the procedure. After surgery, you will be moved to the recovery area where staff will monitor you as you wake up. Most patients are able to go home the same day, provided they are feeling well and comfortable.

What Happens During the Operation?

- You will receive a general anaesthetic, meaning you will be asleep during the surgery.
- Several small incisions will be made in your abdomen.
- A laparoscope and instruments will be inserted to remove the gallbladder.
- The surgery typically takes about one to two hours.

After the Operation

- You will be monitored as you wake up from the anaesthetic.
- Most patients can go home the same day, though some may need to stay overnight.



- You can expect some pain at the incision sites, but this can be managed with pain relief medication.
- It's important to rest for the first few days but start walking as soon as possible to prevent blood clots.
- Most people can return to normal activities within one to two weeks. Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activities for at least two weeks after surgery.

Potential Side Effects

- Some patients experience bloating, gas, or diarrhoea after gallbladder removal, though these usually improve over time.
- In rare cases, bile duct injuries or bile leaks can occur, which may require further treatment.

Follow-Up Care

You will be scheduled for a follow-up appointment to check on your recovery. If you experience severe pain, fever, or signs of infection at the incision sites, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

Long-Term Outlook

Most people live a normal, healthy life without a gallbladder. Your liver will still produce bile, which will flow directly into your small intestine.

Conclusion

Laparoscopic cholecystectomy is a safe and effective procedure for treating gallbladder disease. By removing the gallbladder, most patients experience relief from their symptoms and can return to their normal activities soon after surgery. If you have any concerns or questions, please speak to your surgeon or a member of the healthcare team.