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UG07lite Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy

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This document will give you information about a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What are gallstones?

Gallstones are 'stones' that form in the gallbladder. They are quite common and can run in families. The likelihood of developing gallstones increases with age and in people who eat a diet rich in fat. In some people, gallstones can cause severe symptoms with repeated attacks of abdominal pain being the most common.

What are the benefits of surgery?

You should be free of pain and able to eat a normal diet. Surgery should also prevent the serious complications that gallstones can cause.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

It is possible to dissolve the stones or even shatter them into small pieces but these techniques involve unpleasant drugs that have side effects and a high failure rate. The gallstones usually come back.

Antibiotics can be used to treat any infections of the gallbladder. A low-fat diet may help to prevent attacks of pain. However, symptoms are likely to come back.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes about an hour.

The laparoscopic ('keyhole') technique is usually used. Your surgeon will make several small cuts on your abdomen. They will place surgical instruments, along with a telescope, inside your abdomen and perform the operation (see figure 1).

Your surgeon will free up the gallbladder duct (cystic duct) and artery. They will then separate the gallbladder from the liver, and remove it.

The abdominal cavity is inflated with carbon dioxide gas to help with surgery

A telescope and instruments allow your surgeon to examine the abdomen

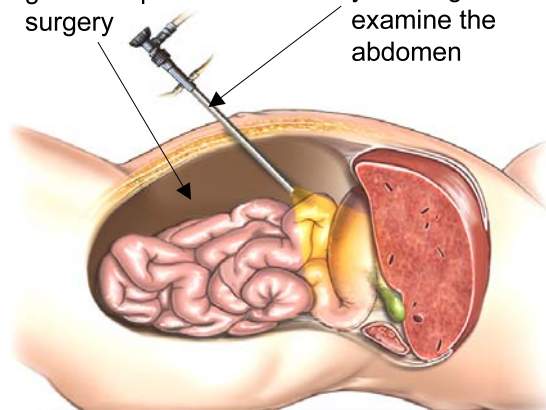


Figure 1

The technique for laparoscopic surgery

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Developing a hernia in the scar
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- Damage to internal organs
- Developing a hernia near one of the cuts
- Surgical emphysema
- Leaking of bile or stones
- Retained stones
- Persistent pain
- Diarrhoea
- Inflammation in the abdomen
- Bile duct injury
- Bowel injury
- Serious damage to the liver

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the following day.

You should be able to return to work after two to four weeks but this may vary depending on the extent of surgery and your type of work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

You should make a full recovery and be able to eat a normal diet.

Summary

Gallstones are a common problem. An operation to remove your gallbladder should result in you being free of pain and able to eat a normal diet. Surgery should also prevent the serious complications that gallstones can cause.

Acknowledgements

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