



After Surgery

General Surgery - Gallbladder removal (Cholecystectomy)

Anesthesia Information

Your physical and mental functions may not feel normal after your surgery.

In the first 24 hours after the surgery, you may have:

- Nausea
- Muscle Aches
- Sore Throat
- Hoarseness

This is expected and should gradually go away within 1-2 days. Contact your family doctor if symptoms persist.

Do:

- Have a responsible person drive you home.
- For 24-48 hours, limit your activity to lying down or resting in a comfortable chair. When getting up or down, move slowly. Limit bending over.
- Follow your surgeon's or anesthesiologist's recommendations about any medications you are taking.
- Eat and drink in small amounts until you feel well enough to go back to your regular diet.

Do Not:

- Drive a car or operate dangerous equipment for 24 hours.
- Make important decisions for 24 hours after your surgery.
- Don't drink alcohol while taking prescription pain medications.

Your Dressing:

- Keep your dressing(s) dry for 48 hours. You may remove the dressings in 2 days.
- If you have steri-strips (small paper tapes), you may remove them in 7-10 days.
- You may shower after 48 hours. Use minimal amounts of soap around your incision for 1 week. Steri-strips can get wet, but do pat them dry after showering.
- You may bath after 2 weeks.
- There are no stitches to remove, they are absorbable. Occasionally a small piece of stitch will protrude from the end of the incision. This can be trimmed off but is not cause for concern.

If you have bleeding on the dressing:

- Sit or lie down. Put steady pressure over the dressing for 20-30 minutes with a clean cloth and your hand.
- Raise the part that is bleeding if you can.
- If the bleeding doesn't stop call your surgeon or go to your nearest Emergency Room.



Medication:

If you have been given a prescription, take it exactly as instructed.

Constipation is common when taking prescription pain medications. Drink plenty of fluids and eat foods high in fiber, like bran cereal, whole wheat or multigrain breads, fresh fruit, and vegetables. (Ask your pharmacist or doctor if you have questions about constipation). A mild bulk forming laxative (e.g. Metamucil) or stool-softener (e.g. Restor-a-lax) may be required. Non-prescription pain medications such as Extra Strength Tylenol and/or Ibuprofen (if you are not allergic to these) can be effective as well. When discomfort lessens, discontinue, or decrease use of pain medications.

Unless otherwise instructed continue all your regular medications after surgery.

Activity after your surgery:

- Do not drive for 7 days after gallbladder surgery (your surgeon may tell you to avoid driving even longer depending on your operation).
- Do not drive within 24 hours of taking prescription pain medication.
- Light activity such as walking, preparing easy meals, and light housework are encouraged and can be resumed at your discretion.
- Avoid rigorous physical activity for 4-6 weeks. This includes more difficult activities such as bending, twisting, vacuuming, mowing, shoveling, lifting more than 10-15 lbs., etc.
- Avoid sexual intercourse for 1 week.
- Discuss return to work with your surgeon the day of your surgery.
- **Any forms to return to work must be brought to the hospital the day of your operation – filling out forms at any other time costs \$50.00 with no exceptions.**

If you have had laparoscopic surgery (surgery done with a scope):

You may experience some discomfort in your shoulder and neck area. This is normal and is caused by the gas placed in your abdomen during surgery. This gas is irritating to your diaphragm (large muscle separating your chest and abdomen), and usually subsides in 1-2 days. Warm packs to the shoulder and neck, pain medications, and moving around will help ease this.

Normal Post-operative Symptoms:

- Small amounts of blood or dried blood coming from your incision site (less than a tablespoon)
- Bruising - most bruising will develop between days 2-5 after your surgery and subside within 2-4 weeks. The bruising may cover your incision site as well as surrounding body parts.
- Swelling - there will be swelling under the incision site for several weeks. Put ice or a cold pack on the area for 10 to 20 minutes at a time. Try to do this every 1 to 2 hours for the next 3 days (when you are awake) or until the swelling goes down. Put a thin cloth between the ice and your skin. Underneath the incision there will be swelling that feels hard and long, like a cigar. This is called the healing ridge and is normal.
- Pain/soreness and discomfort.



- Difficulty with urination can happen in men after hernia surgery. This is especially true if you had prostate trouble before. Try to relax – don't strain. If more than 8 hours passes and you are not able to urinate, report to the emergency department for an assessment.

Contact your Surgeon, or go to an Emergency Department if you have:

- Fever or chills.
- You are sick to your stomach or cannot drink fluids.
- Bright red blood has soaked through your bandage and seems to continue despite applying direct pressure.
- Increased swelling, redness, or warmth around the incision.
- Drainage or pus from the incision site.
- The edges of your incision site are coming apart, or loose stitches.
- Pain that isn't going away or is getting worse, even when taking your pain medication as prescribed.
- You cannot urinate after 8 hours, or the bladder is uncomfortable.
- You cannot pass stools or gas.
- You have signs of a blood clot in your leg (called a deep vein thrombosis), such as:
 - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
 - Redness and swelling in your leg or groin.

If your surgeon isn't available, contact your family doctor, or the nearest Emergency Department.

Follow-up:

- Your surgeon's office will contact you 4 weeks after your surgery to schedule a post-operative appointment for 6 weeks post-op.
- If you have staples or stitches that need to be removed, you will be called with an appointment 2 weeks post-operative to have them removed.