

Cholecystectomy Home Care

The gallbladder is a sac under the liver. It stores bile made in the liver. Bile aids in the break down of fats. Bile is released from the gallbladder into the upper small bowel in response to food (especially fats). Problems which slow or block the flow of bile out of the gallbladder can result in inflammation and/or gall stones.

- In **open gallbladder surgery** (open cholecystectomy), the gallbladder is taken out through a wound in the abdomen that is 4 - 8" long.
- In **laparoscopic surgery** (lap cholecystectomy), you will have 3-5 small wounds. The gallbladder is taken out through the wound near your navel.

After surgery, bile flows from the liver (where it is made) through the common bile duct and into the small bowel. Because the gallbladder is absent, bile no longer can be stored between meals. In most people, this has little or no effect on digestion.

Getting Ready for Surgery

- You may need to make plans to be off work for a week or longer.
- Talk to your doctor. Do chores that require heavy lifting ahead of time and make plans for someone to help you with them after surgery for a few weeks.

After Surgery

Pain

It's normal to have pain. Take the pain pills prescribed by your doctor. You may also take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®) to help manage pain. You

can alternate these medicines with the prescription narcotic pain medicines, but do not take more than 4000mg of acetaminophen in a day.

Shoulder Pain

If your surgery was done using a laparoscope, you may have some pain in your shoulder, neck or back. This is caused by the gas used to inflate your abdomen during surgery. This should only last for 1-2 days. Heating pads will help relieve this. Please use heat on the lowest setting, for no more than 15 minutes at a time.

Wound Care

Look at your wound daily. Watch for signs of infection.

Your wound will be slightly red, swollen, and there may be a small amount of pink drainage for a few days. This is normal.

Keep your wound dry for 2 days. When you can shower, wash the wound with a mild soap and water. Pat it dry. You do not need to wear a bandage unless the wound is draining, your clothes rub on it, or it is in a skin fold. If you do wear a bandage, change it at least daily and more often as needed.

Do not soak your wound in a hot tub, bathtub, or swimming pool until it is healed, which may be 2 weeks.

Activity

Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 4-6 weeks if you had the open surgery. If you had the laparoscopic surgery, do not lift greater than 10 pounds for 2-3 weeks.

Check with your doctor before going back to work.

Sexual activity may be resumed when you feel ready.

You may not be able to drive for 1 week or longer. You may not drive while taking narcotic pain pills.

Diet

You may eat what you like after surgery. It is best to avoid fatty foods at first and slowly add them to your diet.

Constipation

A diet with enough water and fiber can prevent constipation. Eat a well balanced diet daily. Include:

- 6-8 (8 oz.) glasses of fluid each day.
- At least 4 servings of fruits or vegetables.
- At least 4 servings of breads or cereals (2 of these servings should be whole grain).

You may also take stool softeners (docusate sodium) and a bulk fiber laxative (Metamucil, etc.). Follow package directions.

When to Call the Doctor

- Whites of your eyes turn yellow
- Skin develops a yellow color
- Dark urine (the color of tea)
- Itchy skin
- Open area in wound

Signs of Infection

- Pus or blood
- Increasing swelling, firmness, or warmth
- Pain not controlled by pain pills
- Temperature by mouth, above 100.4° F for two readings 4 hours apart

Phone Numbers

Surgery Clinic, Monday – Friday, 8:00–4:30pm, **(608) 263-7502**

This is a 24 hour/day number. After hours, weekends and holidays, **(608) 262-0486**
Ask for the doctor on call for Dr.

Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

Toll Free Number: **1-800-323-8942**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2017 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#4432.