

Liver Resection Surgery

The liver is the largest solid organ and the largest gland in the body. It is one of the few organs that can keep working and possibly grow in size, even when a large part of it is removed.

The liver has two main sections called the right and the left lobes. Each lobe is made up of multiple segments. The gallbladder sits under the liver, along with parts of the pancreas and intestines. The liver and these organs work together to digest, absorb, and process food.

What the Liver Does

The liver does many things. Its main job is to filter the blood coming from the digestive tract. This cleans out toxins and wastes from your body. Other major functions include:

- Breaking down and absorbing medicines.
- Making bile that empties into the intestines.
- Making proteins needed for blood clotting.

About the Surgery

Liver resection is surgery to remove part of the liver. It can range from small (one or part of one segment) to major (up to six segments). The part of your liver with the mass is removed along with some healthy liver tissue on either side. Your gallbladder, which is attached to the liver, is often removed in order to reach the part of liver to be removed.

The surgery can take 2-8 hours. You will need general anesthesia. A blood transfusion may be needed during or after surgery. You might have an incision in the abdomen just below the right rib cage or 3-5 small incisions if the surgery is done

laparoscopically. You may stay 3-14 days in the hospital.

After Surgery

- Wear loose clothing.
- You may shower once approved by your doctor.
- Bruising at your incision site is common.
- Check your wounds daily and report any problems.
- If you go home with a drain, we will teach you how to care for it.
- It is normal to have a hard area along the length of your incision.

Pain

Expect to have pain after surgery. You will have pain medicine to ease the pain. The pain will improve in 1-2 weeks based on the type of incisions you have. Some patients report mild discomfort that could last for a few months after surgery.

Diet

It will take your body time to adjust from surgery. You may not feel like eating much for days to weeks. Your diet will change slowly. Most of our patients go home on a normal diet. Drink plenty of fluids each day and slowly increase the fiber in your diet to prevent constipation. If you do not feel like eating food, try to have up to 3 servings of liquid protein drinks a day. Examples include Ensure[®], Muscle Milk[®], Boost[®], and Carnation[®] Instant Breakfast.

Activity

We will help you walk the day after surgery. Plan to take 4 short walks a day. This is a vital part of your recovery. Plan for rest times during the day. Major fatigue is very common as the liver restores itself. It may

take 2-3 months or more for you to feel like yourself again.

Restrictions

- Light activity at home after surgery.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 6 weeks.
- No activity more strenuous than walking or climbing stairs until approved by your doctor.
- Check with your doctor before going back to work.
- No driving while you are taking opioid pain medicine.
- Resume sex when you feel ready.
- Avoid all tobacco including secondhand smoke.

When to Call

- Whites of your eyes turn yellow
- Skin develops a yellow color
- Rapid or excessive bruising
- Dark urine (the color of tea)
- Itchy skin
- Incision is more red or warm to touch
- Pus-like drainage
- Excess swelling or bleeding
- Fever over 100.5° F by mouth for two readings taken 4 hours apart.
- Pain not controlled with pain pills
- Bloating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Constipation
- Any new symptoms that concern you

Who to Call

Surgery Clinic
(608) 263-7502

Monday -Friday 8 am – 4:30 pm

After hours, contact the paging operator at **608-263-6400**. Ask for the Surgical Oncology Resident on call.

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 © 7/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7227