

Laparoscopic Gallbladder Surgery:

Home instructions

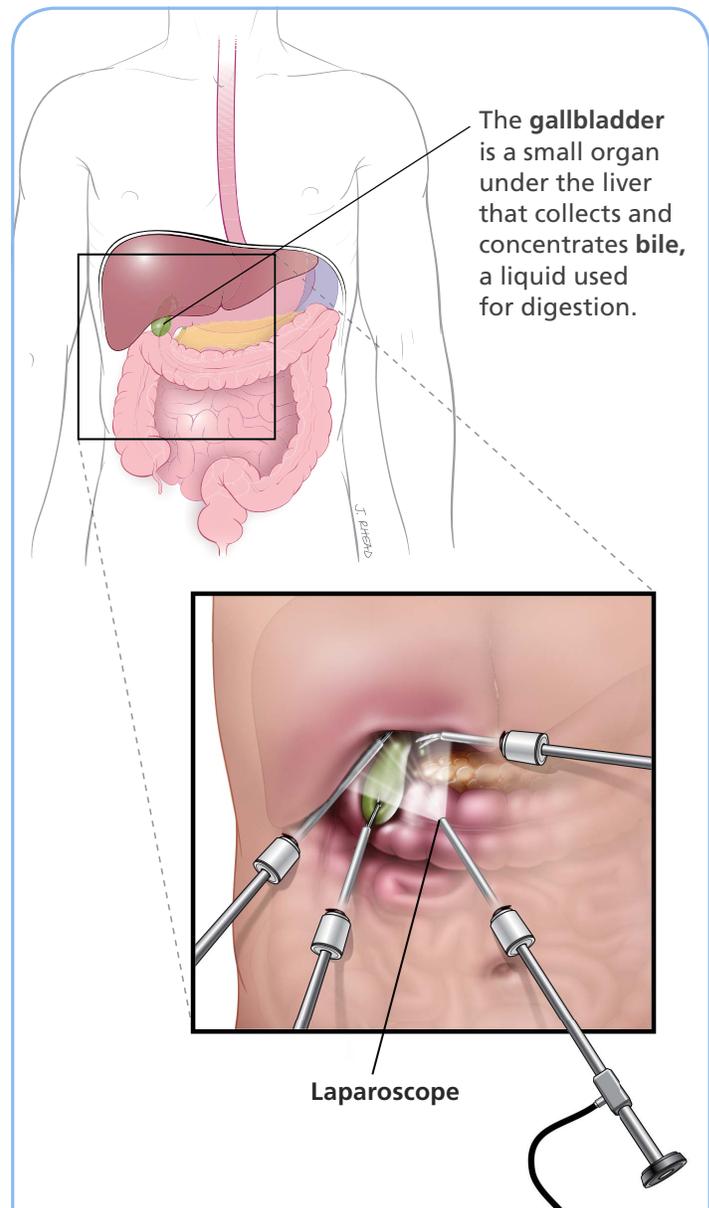
What is it?

Laparoscopic gallbladder surgery is a procedure to take out your gallbladder. During this procedure, the surgeon makes 4 small incisions (cuts) in your abdomen (belly). A harmless gas is pumped into your abdomen so that the doctor can better see your organs. A long tube with a tiny camera at the end (a **laparoscope**) is put through one of the incisions. The camera sends a video of the inside of the abdomen to a computer screen. This allows your doctor to see and take out the gallbladder using other small surgical tools. The entire procedure usually lasts less than 2 hours.

Note: There is a chance that your doctor may have to switch to an open surgery if a more difficult problem is discovered. In this case, the doctor will need to make a larger incision, which will likely mean a longer hospital stay and recovery period.

What should I expect after the procedure?

- **Closing your incisions:** After the gallbladder is taken out, the incisions are closed with stitches and small strips of tape. A dressing may be placed over the incisions.
- **Monitoring your recovery:** After the procedure, you will be taken to a recovery room where you will be monitored for about an hour or more.
- **Going home:** You can usually go home the same day. You will need a responsible adult to drive you home. Before you leave, your nurse will give you some home care instructions. Make sure someone is there to take notes, because after surgery you may not remember everything.



Laparoscopic gallbladder surgery removes an inflamed, infected, or cancerous gallbladder using tiny incisions (cuts) and an instrument called a **laparoscope**.

How do I care for myself at home?

Incision care

- Your doctor will tell you when it's okay to take off your dressing.
- You can take a bath or shower when your doctor says it's okay. In most cases, you can bathe or shower within 1 to 2 days.
- If you have strips of tape on your incision, leave them in place until they fall off (usually within 7 to 10 days). Your doctor may take them off, along with any stitches, at your follow-up visit. If the edges of the tape strips start to peel, trim them with scissors. Let your doctor know if the tape strips irritate your skin. In this case, you may need to remove them earlier.
- Tell your doctor if you have signs of infection at the incision site. These include increased redness or swelling, pus, or fever over 101°F.

Pain management

- You may have the following types of pain or discomfort after surgery:
 - **Incision pain** for the first few days. It may take a few weeks to go away completely.
 - **Shoulder or neck pain** for the first 2 or 3 days. The pain may get better if you change positions.
 - **Cramping or swelling** in your abdomen for the first several days.
 - **A sore throat** from the breathing tube used to keep your airway open during the procedure. This should go away in 1 to 2 days.
- You will be given pain medicine (pills). Take this medicine exactly as ordered by your doctor. Pain medicine may cause constipation. If necessary, you may use a mild laxative.

Follow-up appointment

Your doctor will want to see you about a week after the procedure. Be sure to keep your follow-up appointment.

Diet

- Your doctor may recommend that you start with clear liquids for the first day and then slowly add solid food over the next day or two.
- You may have some indigestion or diarrhea, which should get better within a few days. However, it may take a few weeks for your digestive system to fully adjust after your procedure.
- Once you're back to normal, eat a balanced diet.

Rest and activity

- You are likely to feel tired the day of surgery, so rest that day.
- For the next 3 to 5 days, get up and walk 4 to 5 times each day. This will improve the blood flow in your legs and reduce the risk of blood clots or muscle soreness. Deep breathing for the first few days after surgery is also helpful.
- Avoid heavy lifting or exercise for the first 7 days or so. You can get back to work and your other daily activities when your doctor says it's okay.



When should I call my doctor?

- You can't urinate within 8 to 10 hours after surgery or have no bowel movements after 3 days.
- You have severe or increasing pain, or pain you can't control.
- You have nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea that doesn't go away within a few days.
- Your stomach feels swollen or severely bloated.
- You feel faint or light-headed, even when lying down.
- You have chills or a fever over 101°F.
- You have increased redness or swelling at your incision sites.
- You have a large amount of bleeding.
- You have jaundice (yellow eyes or skin).
- You feel short of breath.
- You have pain or swelling in your lower leg.