

# GALLBLADDER REMOVAL SURGERY (CHOLECYSTECTOMY)

## WHAT IS LAPAROSCOPIC GALLBLADDER REMOVAL SURGERY?

Gallbladder removal is one of the most commonly performed surgical procedures. Gallbladder removal surgery is usually performed with minimally invasive techniques and the medical name for this procedure is *Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy*.

## WHAT CAUSES GALLBLADDER PROBLEMS?

- Gallbladder problems are usually caused by the presence of gallstones which are usually small and hard, consisting primarily of cholesterol and bile salts that form in the gallbladder or in the bile duct.
- It is uncertain why some people form gallstones but risk factors include being female, prior pregnancy, age over 40 years and being overweight. Gallstones are also more common as you get older and some people may have a family history of gallstones.
- There is no known means to prevent gallstones.
- These stones may block the flow of bile out of the gallbladder, causing it to swell and resulting in sharp abdominal pain, vomiting, indigestion and, occasionally, fever.
- If the gallstone blocks the common bile duct, jaundice (a yellowing of the skin) can occur.

## HOW ARE GALLBLADDER PROBLEMS FOUND AND TREATED?

- Ultrasound is most commonly used to find gallstones.
- In a few more complex cases, other X-ray test such as a CT scan or a gallbladder nuclear medicine scan may be used to evaluate gallbladder disease.
- Gallstones do not go away on their own. Some can be temporarily managed by making dietary adjustments, such as reducing fat intake. This treatment has a low, short-term success rate. Symptoms will eventually continue unless the gallbladder is removed. Treatments to break up or dissolve gallstones are largely unsuccessful.
- Surgical removal of the gallbladder is the safest treatment of gallbladder disease.

## WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER GALLBLADDER REMOVAL SURGERY (CHOLECYSTECTOMY)?

- Gallbladder removal is a major abdominal operation and a certain amount of postoperative pain occurs. Transient or temporary nausea and vomiting may occur as a side effect of both the surgery and the medications used for anesthesia. This tends to be limited to 1-2 days after surgery.

- Most patients who have a laparoscopic gallbladder removal go home from the hospital the day of surgery.
- Patients will probably be able to return to normal activities within a week's time, including driving, light lifting and working.
- In general, recovery should be progressive, once the patient is at home.
- The onset of fever, yellow skin or eyes, worsening abdominal pain, distention, persistent nausea or vomiting, or drainage from the incision indicate that a complication or other problem has occurred. Your surgeon should be contacted in these instances.

## **WHAT COMPLICATIONS CAN OCCUR FROM LAPAROSCOPIC GALLBLADDER REMOVAL?**

While there are risks associated with any kind of operation, the vast majority of laparoscopic gallbladder removal patients experience few or no complications and quickly return to normal activities.

Complications of laparoscopic gallbladder removal (cholecystectomy) are infrequent, but include bleeding, wound infection, hernias, blood clots, or heart problems. Unintended injury to adjacent structures such as the common bile duct, colon, or small intestine may occur and may require another surgical procedure to repair it. Bile leakage into the abdomen from the tubular channels leading from the liver to the intestine may rarely occur.

Numerous medical studies show that the complication rate for laparoscopic gallbladder removal surgery is comparable to or even lower than the complication rate for open gallbladder removal surgery when performed by a properly trained surgeon. The overall rate of severe complications is low.

The above information was obtained from the SAGES website (<https://www.sages.org/publications/patient-information/patient-information-for-laparoscopic-gallbladder-removal-cholecystectomy-from-sages>)