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## LAPAROSCOPIC CHOLECYSTECTOMY (REMOVAL OF THE GALL BLADDER)

### PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

General Surgery

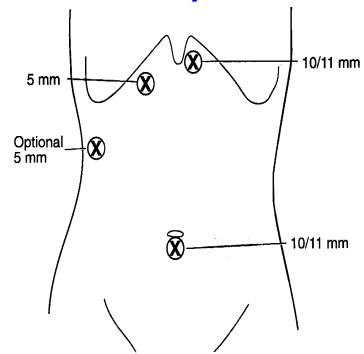
Sunderland Royal Hospital

## What is this leaflet about and who is it for?

## Notes

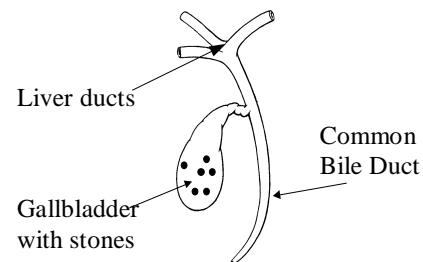
This leaflet has been produced for patients who are about to undergo a Laparoscopic cholecystectomy (removal of the gallbladder). This leaflet helps to explain the operation to remove your gallbladder and gallstones.

## What is the procedure?



Laparoscopic cholecystectomy is an operation performed under general anaesthetic. Using a small telescope connected to a camera. The surgeon removes your gallbladder usually through 4 small incisions in the abdominal wall to cut out and remove the gallbladder. Sometimes an X-ray of the bile ducts may need to be carried out.

## Why am I having it?



- Your doctor has advised you that the best treatment for your symptoms is to have your gallbladder removed.
- Tests have revealed that you have gallstones in your gallbladder. These stones can block the flow of bile out of the gallbladder, causing it to swell

and possibly become This is causing your symptoms of pain/nausea vomiting, indigestion and occasionally fever

- The gallbladder is removed when you have stones or inflammation in your gallbladder. This operation is to prevent you from having further attacks of pain.

## What to expect afterwards?

- You will be uncomfortable and may feel bloated after your operation.
- Some patients get shoulder pain which can last 24 hours, you will be given some painkillers from the hospital.
- You should be able to eat and drink soon after surgery, although some patients may feel nauseated for 24 hours.
- We hope to discharge you the same day but you may need to stay in overnight.
- If open surgery is necessary, you may stay in hospital for 7 to 10 days.

## Will I need to come back to the hospital?

- If your surgery is uncomplicated, you will not usually need to come back to the hospital for a follow up appointment.
- Your surgeon may want to see you again if the operation was difficult

## When should I contact my doctor?

- If you develop a **fever**.
- If you develop an unusual amount of **pain** that is not settled by the painkillers prescribed by the hospital.
- Nausea is common for a few days after your operation but if you develop **vomiting** and are **unable to eat or drink** you should contact your doctor.
- If you become **jaundiced** (yellow eyes or dark urine).

## What are the benefits?

- Minimal access surgery (keyhole) will result in:
  - Shorter stay in hospital
  - Less pain after surgery
  - Faster return to normal activities

## Is there an alternative?

- A small number of gallstones can be dissolved, but this takes years and does not stop new stones forming again.
- The majority of gallstones will not dissolve.
- You can refuse surgery, but you run the risk of recurring or worsening symptoms from gallstones.
- Other treatments are available but only if you cannot have surgery due to other medical reasons.

## What preparation is needed?

- You will be invited to attend a pre-assessment clinic for a general health check.
- This may include an ECG (tracing of the heart) and blood samples to check if you are fit for a general anaesthetic.
- When this is complete you will be offered a date to come into hospital.
- You will also be given details about when to stop eating, drinking and smoking before your operation.

## What will happen on arrival and whom will I meet?

- You will be admitted to the ward and introduced to your named nurse who will manage your nursing care.
- You will also be reviewed by the medical staff and the anaesthetist.

### **Will I need to sign consent or is verbal consent needed?**

Your consent to the operation will be confirmed prior to your operation.

### **What does the procedure involve?**

- The operation is performed using a small telescope (laparoscope) connected to a camera. The surgeon makes 3 - 4 small incisions in the abdominal wall to cut out and remove the gallbladder.
- Sometimes the surgeon needs to do an x-ray of the bile ducts during the operation to look for stones in the main ducts draining the liver.
- Following removal of the gallbladder, the incisions are closed with a few dissolvable stitches or steristrips.

### **What are the risks associated with the procedure?**

- While there are risks associated with any kind of operation, the vast majority of patients experience no or minor complications following laparoscopic cholecystectomy.
- Reported complications include internal and wound bleeding, wound infections, pneumonia, blood clots in the legs (DVT), damage to nearby organs and bile leakage.

### **How long does it last?**

- Your operation can take between 1-3 hours depending on where the stones are, if there are any adhesions for inflammation and the difficulty of the operation.
- Uncomplicated operations usually take about 60 minutes. We hope to be able to discharge you home the same day.

- Your surgeon may need to change your laparoscopic operation to an open operation. This is necessary in less than 5% of all cases and is not a failure of keyhole surgery, but is done for your overall safety.
- Open surgery may be necessary if large stones are found in the main duct draining the liver.
- Smaller stones can be retrieved by a telescope test after your operation (called an ERCP).
- Sometimes these small stones can be treated by keyhole surgery but you may have to have small drainage tubes left in after surgery.

### **What happens when I go home?**

- You may still experience discomfort and bloating because of gas in the abdomen. You will be supplied with painkillers to take home.
- Some patients also feel sick during this period.
- Most patients are able to return to normal activities after 7 to 10 days, but this does depend on how active you were before surgery.
- You should get back to normal activities such as walking up stairs, lifting light objects and light domestic duties within one week.
- Following your general anaesthetic it is a legal requirement that you do not drive for 48 hours. After this you may drive once you feel comfortable to do so. (Normally about 1-2 weeks)
- Dissolving sutures are used during the operation, but may be removed after two weeks if they are irritating.
- All dressings can be removed after 48 hours and normal bathing recommenced.