

Laparoscopic Gallbladder Surgery (Lap Chole)

This information sheet explains what a laparoscopic cholecystectomy (lap chole) involves, what to expect after surgery, how to care for yourself at home, and when to seek medical attention.

What Is a Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy?

A laparoscopic cholecystectomy, commonly known as a lap chole, is a keyhole operation to remove the gallbladder. It is usually performed to treat gallstones or gallbladder disease causing pain, infection, or inflammation. The procedure uses 3–4 small incisions instead of one large cut.

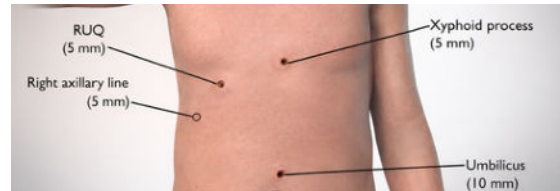
Why Is the Gallbladder Removed?

The gallbladder is removed for symptomatic gallstones or gallbladder polyps, or in rare occasion, if a concerning growth is seen in wall of the gallbladder. The gallbladder stores bile, which helps digest fats, but living without a gallbladder is well tolerated, meaning you can live a normal life without a gallbladder.



What Happens On The Day Of Surgery?

The operation is performed under general anaesthetic and usually takes 45–90 minutes. A small camera and fine instruments are inserted through small incisions to safely remove the gallbladder. Most patients go home the same day or the following day.



Pain and Discomfort After Surgery

Mild to moderate pain is common after surgery, particularly around the small wounds, in the upper abdomen, or in the shoulder due to gas used during the procedure. Pain typically improves within 2–5 days. Take pain relief as prescribed.



Activity and Recovery

Gentle walking is encouraged from the day of surgery. Avoid heavy lifting (>5kg), repetitive bending or straining, or strenuous activity for 4–6 weeks. Most patients return to light activities within a few days and to work within 1–2 weeks, depending on their occupation.



Wound Care

Small dressings will cover the wounds, please keep them clean and dry. Showering is usually permitted after 24–48 hours, and the dressings may be removed after 5 days. Your stitches will be dissolvable and do not need to be removed. Mild bruising or swelling is common, and some clear ooze is to be expected.



Diet After Surgery

Start with light meals and gradually return to a normal diet as tolerated. Some patients experience temporary bloating or loose stools, particularly after fatty or greasy foods. This usually settles over several weeks.



When to Seek Medical Attention

Contact my team or attend the emergency department if you develop a fever above 38°C, increasing abdominal pain, yellowing of the skin or eyes (jaundice), persistent nausea or vomiting, redness or discharge from wounds, chest pain, or shortness of breath.

Follow-Up

A follow-up appointment is usually arranged within 2–4 weeks after surgery. Any pathology results will be discussed, and recovery progress reviewed.