

Laparoscopic Gallbladder Surgery

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout is for patients who are having laparoscopic surgery to remove their gallbladder. It explains what to expect, how to prepare for surgery, and how to plan for your recovery.

What is laparoscopic surgery?

In *laparoscopic surgery*, 4 or more small incisions are made in your body. This method leaves smaller scars than *open surgery*. You should also have a faster recovery.

In laparoscopic gallbladder surgery (*cholecystectomy*), your surgeon will use special tools to remove your gallbladder. These instruments will be inserted through small incisions in your abdomen.

During surgery, your abdomen will be filled with *carbon dioxide* (CO₂) gas. This lifts your skin away from your organs so that your doctor can see the area better.



Your surgery will be done in the Surgery Pavilion at University of Washington Medical Center.

How to Prepare

- **Medicines:** Do **not** take aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 1 week before your surgery. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). See attached sheet for more information.
- **Shaving:** Do **not** shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do not shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.
- **Going home:** Plan for a responsible adult to drive you home from the hospital and stay with you the first night. You cannot drive yourself or take a taxi or bus home alone from the hospital.

Day Before Surgery

- **Arrival time:** An OR (operating room) scheduler will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your surgery and tell you when to come to the hospital. If your surgery is on a Monday, the scheduler will call you the Friday before.

If you do not receive this call by 5 p.m., call 206.598.6541.

- **Shower:** Take a shower the night before your surgery. Use the special antibacterial soap your nurse gave you.
 - Do **not** use the special soap on your face, hair, or private parts. Use your own soap and shampoo on those areas. (See the directions that came with the soap.)
 - Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.

Surgery Day

- **Shower at home:** Take a shower in the morning of your surgery. Follow the same steps as you did for your shower the night before.
- **Heating blanket:** At the hospital, we will cover you with a heating blanket while you wait to go into the OR. This warms your body and helps prevent infection.

After Surgery

You will go home the night after your surgery or the next morning. Plan for a responsible adult to drive you home from the hospital. If you go home the same day as your surgery, plan for an adult to stay with you the first night.

For Your Safety

Medicines you receive during and after your surgery will affect your ability to think clearly. For 24 hours after your surgery, do **not**:

- Drive
- Travel by yourself
- Use machines
- Drink alcohol
- Sign legal papers or make important decisions
- Be responsible for children, pets, or an adult who needs care

Incision Care

- Your incisions will be covered by plastic bandages. You can remove the plastic bandages and shower 48 hours after surgery.
- After removing the plastic bandages, shower every day. Do **not** scrub the incision site.
- Under the bandages, your incisions will be covered by white tapes called Steri-Strips. These tapes will fall off by themselves after several days.
- Check your incisions every day for the signs of infection listed under “When to Call,” below.

Medicines

- Do **not** take aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting until 2 days after your surgery (see attached sheet).
- Take your pain medicines as prescribed.
- Start taking your regular medicines as prescribed.

Return to Work

Return to work when you feel OK doing so. Most people can go back to work within 1 week.

When to Call

Call the Nurse Advice Line at 206.598.4477 or your doctor if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incisions:
 - Redness or swelling
 - Pain that is getting worse
 - Drainage that smells bad, or a change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Yellow skin (*jaundice*)
- Any concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call the Surgical Specialties Nurse Advice Line at 206.598.4477.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the resident on call for Surgery to be paged.

Or, ask for your surgeon to be paged:

Dr. _____