

Patient advice sheet

Going home after laparoscopic surgery

We hope that your stay in hospital has been as pleasant as possible and that you will soon feel better than you did before your operation. Laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery has some benefits over conventional surgery ie surgery through an abdominal incision (cut). You should not have as much pain and discomfort, be able to move a little more easily and your discharge from hospital may be quicker.

This leaflet explains what to expect when you return home. Your recovery will depend upon:

- How fit you were before the operation.
- The reason for your operation.
- The exact type of laparoscopic surgery you have had.
- How smoothly everything went and whether there were any complications.

Effects of general anaesthesia

You will have had a general anaesthetic for your surgery. Generally, you should not have any side effects for more than a day after the operation. During the first 24 hours after a general anaesthetic you will feel more sleepy than usual. You should have an adult with you at this time and avoid drinking alcohol. It is advisable not to drive or operate machinery during this period.

Cuts and stitches

You will have between one and five small incisions on your tummy (through which the operation was performed). These incisions will have been closed by stitches, glue or staples. The Practice Nurse at your local surgery can usually take out staples or undissolved stitches that need to be removed about 5 days after your operation. The dressings that cover the stitches should be taken off about 24 hours after your surgery when you have a wash or shower.

Pain and discomfort

You can expect to have some pain and discomfort in your abdomen after your operation, and you may experience shoulder tip (top of the arm and end of the shoulder) pain. This is not unusual. You will be given pain relief before you leave hospital and advice on what medication you can take at home.

Reducing the risk of blood clots

There is a small risk of blood clots forming in your legs after your surgery. These may travel to the lungs and therefore be more serious. To reduce the risk of clots:

- Be as mobile as you can after your operation.
- Do exercises whilst you are resting, such as moving each foot up and down briskly for 30 seconds and in a circular motion for 30 seconds and bend and straighten each leg alternatively, three times for each leg.
- You may also have been given graduated compression stockings to wear day and night until your mobility improves or have been prescribed blood thinning drugs to be used as prescribed by your doctor.

How can I help my recovery?

Establish a daily routine and keep it. You will benefit from eating a healthy balanced high fibre diet (fruit, vegetables, wholegrain bread and cereal) you should drink adequate fluids—up to 2 litres (4 pints) a day. If you smoke, stopping will aid recovery. A positive attitude to recovery is beneficial. Exercise regularly and eat healthily.

When should I seek medical advice after a laparoscopy?

If the skin around your abdominal incisions becomes red or angry looking, this may indicate an infection and you should consult your doctor for possible antibiotic treatment.

A painful, hot or swollen leg might indicate you have developed a clot (DVT deep vein thrombosis) within that leg and you should contact your General Practitioner (GP) immediately.

Burning and stinging when passing urine suggests you may have a urinary infection. Contact your GP to determine if you require antibiotic treatment. Contact your GP if you have difficulties in passing urine

If you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Increasing abdominal pain/tenderness
- Abdominal distension (bloating tummy)
- Have a temperature (fever) and/or chills
- Lose your appetite
- Are persistently vomiting or nauseous
- This may be caused by injury to one of your abdominal organs, in which case you may need to be admitted to hospital.

Please note that in general you should experience a gradual improvement of all your symptoms after your surgery. If this is not the case you should contact your GP.

Exercise

There is no reason that you should not start walking the day you return home from hospital. You should aim to gradually increase your activity levels over the following days and many patients will be able to increase their walks to 30 to 60 minutes, 2 to 3 weeks after the operation. Swimming can be resumed 2 to 3 weeks after your surgery. Previous levels of activity will usually be reached within 4 to 6 weeks.

Driving

You should not drive for at least 24 hours after a general anaesthetic. Before you drive, ensure that you are able to:

- Sit in the car comfortably and work all the controls
- Wear a seat belt comfortably
- Perform an emergency stop
- Look comfortably over both shoulders
- Concentrate fully.

Having sex

Women will usually be able to have sex comfortably 4-6 weeks after their operation. If there is initial dryness a lubricant from your local pharmacy can be used.

OUTSTANDING CARE

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

AND A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Work

You are the best judge as to when you feel ready to return to work depending on the type of work you do and the hours you work, particularly as some jobs are more strenuous than others. Some will feel that they are able to return to work after 2-4 weeks, but you may be off work for shorter or longer than this. Nevertheless, returning to work can help your recovery by getting you back into your normal routine. Consider starting part way through the working week so you have a planned break quite soon. You should only return to work when you feel ready.

Finally

If you have any questions or worries about your continued recovery at home please contact the Surgical Floor SMH on 01296 318110 or Ward 12C WH on 01494 426018 at any time.

Please Note

This leaflet explains some of the most common side-effects some people may experience. However, it is not comprehensive. If you experience other side-effects and want to ask anything else related to your treatment please speak to staff on your ward.

Reference:

RCOG patient information leaflets:

[Laparoscopic hysterectomy recovering well leaflet \(rcog.org.uk\)](http://rcog.org.uk)

[Laparoscopy recovering well leaflet \(rcog.org.uk\)](http://rcog.org.uk)

Useful Contact Numbers

Stoke Mandeville Hospital

Surgical Floor 01296 418110 24 hours

Wycombe Hospital

and ask for Day Surgery 01494 526161 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Wycombe Hospital

Ward 12C 01494 426018 24 hours

How can you help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention and control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention and control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email bht.pals@nhs.net

Division of Women, Children & Sexual Health Services

OUTSTANDING CARE

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

AND A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

Approvals:

Gynae Guidelines Group: Feb/Apr 2012/Aug 2012, V2 Feb 2016 & V3 Nov 2019, V3.1 Jul 2021, V4 Chair's action 5.6.23

Divisional Board: Apr 2012, O&G SDU V2 May 2016, V3 Nov 2019, V4 21.6.23

Clinical Guidelines Subgroup: Apr 2012, V2 not req

MSLC: Sep 2012

Equality Impact Assessment: August 2013, V2 Jun 2016, V4 Jun 2023

Patient Experience Group: V1 Feb 2013, V4 Aug 2023

OUTSTANDING CARE

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

AND A GREAT PLACE TO WORK