

What You Should Know About Gallbladder Surgery



WHAT IS THE GALLBLADDER?

The gallbladder is the storage area for bile. It releases the bile into your intestines when you eat, to help digest fatty foods. Gallstones form from an imbalance of cholesterol, calcium and fatty acids.

WHY DO I GET PAIN?

The gallbladder empties into the bowel through a small tube called the cystic duct. When this tube gets plugged up, either from sludge or a stone, the bile can't get out. Pressure builds up. This can be painful and often leads to infection.

ARE THERE OTHER PROBLEMS STONES CAN CAUSE?

If a stone migrates further down the bile ducts, it can also block the liver and/or the pancreas. You can become jaundiced and suffer pancreatic problems. These can be life threatening problems. The gallbladder is not removed without good reason.

HOW IS SURGERY PERFORMED?

A Laparoscopic camera is inserted through a small incision near your navel. This allows your surgeon to view the gallbladder on a video monitor. It is then removed with instruments through other small incisions. The advantage to you is a faster recovery, and less pain. If severe infection or unusual findings are found, the surgery may be converted to an 'open' procedure. This requires a traditional incision. It is done for your safety.

WHAT IS INVOLVED WITH THE SURGERY?

- Most patients are home the following day.
- When you return home, you will be able to shower, eat, and climb stairs.
- Someone should stay at home with you the first several days after discharge.
- Many patients can return to work within the first week. Some need more time.
- You can live a normal life without the gallbladder. Some people report looser stool initially after the procedure, others notice no change at all.

ARE THERE COMPLICATIONS TO SURGERY?

There are risks associated with any surgery. These can be life-threatening, and include blood clots, pneumonia, stroke, and/or heart problems. Providence Hospital has on staff, board certified specialists in all major fields of medicine. They can be called upon to help if needed. Fortunately, with modern technology these complications are rare.

COMPLICATIONS SPECIFIC TO SURGERY:

- Excessive bleeding infection
- Injury to surrounding organs
- Injury to the common bile duct
- Bile leaks

These complications are fortunately rare. They can however be serious, necessitating further surgery.

Return for exam in ____ weeks

Re-evaluation

Flexible Sigmoidoscopy

Colonoscopy

Follow-up only if symptoms persist

This fact sheet is for use by physicians only and is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. All specific medical questions or concerns should be presented to your own healthcare provider.