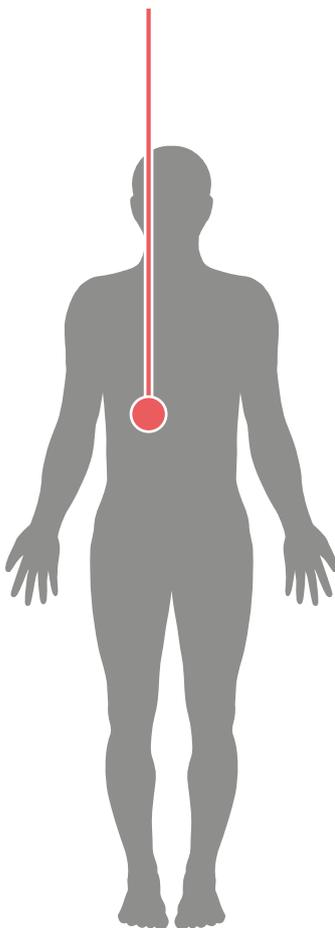


Get Well Soon

Helping you to make a speedy recovery after gallbladder removal

Gallbladder Removal



Contents

Who this leaflet is for	2
What to expect after the operation	3
Things that will help you recover more quickly	4
Returning to work	5
Planning for your return	6
Driving	7
Recovery tracker	8
Recovery tracker	9
Recovery tracker	10
After you get home	11
Keeping well	13
Website links	14

This leaflet is a guide to recovering from a gallbladder removal operation. It does not provide specific medical advice or diagnosis, nor does it give advice about whether you should consent to an operation. All of these matters depend on individual medical advice from your consultant surgeon based on your own health, medical condition and personal circumstances.

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Who this leaflet is for

Print instructions:

To print this document click once on the print icon in your Acrobat Browser, or go to File, then Print on the drop down menu.

To print only one page, select the page number you want in your print menu, usually under 'options' or 'preferences' depending on the printer type.

To save ink, select the 'draft' option.

This leaflet is for anyone who is recovering from, or is about to undergo surgery to have their gall bladder, together with the contained gall stones, removed by keyhole surgery.

The technical term for your operation is a laparoscopic cholecystectomy, which is how your surgeon and other health professionals who are helping you may refer to it.

This leaflet should be read in conjunction with any other information you have already been given about your procedure.

The following information is designed to help you make the important decisions about your recovery. Your surgeon, GP and other healthcare professionals will offer you a lot of very good advice - but ultimately it's you that has to make the decisions.

The advice in this leaflet offers broad guidelines for people who do not have any complications with their surgery, or other specific medical circumstances, such as a long-term condition.

Obviously, every individual has different needs and recovers in different ways – so not all the advice in this leaflet will be suitable for everybody. When you're weighing up how to make the decision that's right for you, talk to your surgeon, your GP, or your Occupational Health service at work, if you have one. They will all help you to make the right choices for a safe and speedy recovery.

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What to expect after the operation

Painkillers

Painkillers may well cause constipation, so it's important to get plenty of fibre in your diet while you are recovering. Fresh fruit and vegetables will help to keep your bowels moving regularly.

Scar

You'll have between 2 and 4 small scars at different points on your abdomen. Each one will be small - 1-2 cm. These small wounds may be closed in various ways, including dissolvable stitches or skin glue.

Stitches

If you have stitches which need to be removed, this can usually be done by the practice nurse at your GP surgery, 7-10 days after your operation. Your hospital should already have given you advice about how your wounds are closed and how to care for them.

Dressings

You do not need to keep the scars covered, though some people find it more comfortable to do so. You do not need to worry about getting the scar wet. Many patients have concerns that standing up straight will pull at the stitches. Don't worry about this. Getting out of bed and standing up straight will actually help you to recover more quickly.

Discomfort

You will experience pain and discomfort around the scars, especially for the first few days. You may also have pain in your shoulder for a couple of days as well.

Tiredness

Your body is using a lot of energy to heal itself, so you will feel more tired than normal - sometimes it can come upon you suddenly.

Feeling emotional

If you feel upset or emotional in the days and weeks after your operation, don't worry - this is a perfectly normal reaction which many people experience.

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Things that will help you recover more quickly

If you live alone, and you do not have family or friends close by, organise support in advance - have family or friends come to stay with you for the first few days after surgery if possible.

Eat healthily

Eating a healthy diet will help to ensure that your body has all the nutrients it needs to heal.

Stop smoking

By not smoking - even if it's just for the time that you're recovering - you immediately start to improve your circulation and your breathing - not to mention a whole list of other benefits to the heart and lungs.

Family and friends

Family and friends can give you two important things:

- Practical help with the tasks you might be temporarily unable to do while you recover - such as driving, the weekly shop, or lifting heavier items.
- Keeping your spirits up - the novelty soon wears off being home alone all day, and it's easy to feel isolated by this. Having company can help you to worry less. It's important not to let anxiety set in, as it can become a problem in itself which stands in the way of you getting back to your normal routine.

Keep a routine

Get up at your normal time in the morning, get dressed and move about the house. If you get tired, you can rest later.

Build up gradually

Have a go at doing some of the things you'd normally do, but build up gradually. Some suggestions are included in the recovery tracker. Obviously, everyone recovers at a different speed, so not all of the suggestions will be suitable for everybody.

When you're building up your activities, you may feel more tired than normal. If so, stop, and rest until your strength returns. If you feel pain, stop immediately. If you are concerned, consult your GP. As you build up your activities, you may feel more tired than normal. If so, stop and rest until your strength returns. If you feel pain, you have probably just overdone it a little. Ease back and then gradually increase again. If you are concerned, consult your GP.

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Returning to work

You do not need your GP's permission to go back to work - this is ultimately your decision.

Fact: Work can be part of your recovery

Everyone needs time off to recover after an operation - but too much of it can stand in the way of you getting back to normal. In fact, by staying off for too long, people can become isolated and depressed. Getting back to your normal work routine sooner rather than later can actually help you to recover more quickly.

Getting back to work

How quickly you return to work depends on a number of things:

- How you heal
- How you respond to surgery
- The type of job you do

People whose work involves a lot of heavy lifting, or standing up or walking for long periods of time, will not be able to return to work as quickly as those who have office jobs which are less demanding physically.

How soon can I go back?

Every person recovers differently and has different needs. In most cases it's usually safe to return to work 10-14 days after the operation. If your employer has an occupational health nurse or doctor they will advise you on this. Alternatively your GP can give you advice. Ultimately, it's your decision when you want to go back, and there's no insurance risk to your employer if you choose to do so. You do not need your GP's permission to go back to work - this is ultimately your decision.

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Planning for your return

3 golden rules for a speedy recovery:

Stay active.

Keep a normal daily routine.

Keep social contact with people.

Confidence

It will take you a little while to regain your full confidence when you go back to work. You may be slower than normal at first, so don't take on too much responsibility too soon. Don't be too hard on yourself about this - it's perfectly normal and you'll start to get back up to speed after a few days.

Talk to your Occupational Health service or GP to work out when and how is best for you to return to work.

Depending on the nature of your job, you might want to ask your employer about returning to work on lighter duties at first. This means:

- Spending more time sitting rather than standing or walking
- Doing work that is mostly paperwork, using a computer or telephone
- Not carrying more than around 5kg any significant distance
- Avoiding tasks such as prolonged loading or unloading, packing or unpacking.

If you have an HR Department at work, they will be able to advise you on how your absence might affect any benefits you may be receiving during your time off.

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Driving

Your insurance company should be informed about your operation. Some companies will not insure drivers for a number of weeks after surgery, so it's important to check what your policy says.

Before resuming driving, you should be free from the sedative effects of any painkillers you may be taking. You should be comfortable in the driving position and able to safely control your car, including freely performing an emergency stop.

Driving - an exercise

After about a week, you might want to test your fitness to drive. Do this in a safe place without putting the keys in the ignition: simply sit in the driving seat and practise putting your feet down on the pedals. Again, build up gradually. If you feel pain, stop immediately. If you feel sore afterwards, you may need to wait a day or two and try again. Only when you can put enough pressure on the pedals to do an emergency stop - without feeling any pain or soreness afterwards - should you think about driving again.

It is advisable not to restart driving with a long journey.

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Recovery tracker

Days Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
1-2 days	Your midriff will be sore from the operation and you may have pain in your shoulder as well. You will also feel a lot more tired than normal. Take things easy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get up, get dressed, move around the house. • Eat and drink as normal. • If you feel tired, rest for a while and try moving around again later. 		No
3 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be much less pain in your midriff and shoulder. • You should be able to move a lot more easily than in the last couple of days, but you'll still get tired more quickly than you did before the operation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue as day 1-2. • Go for a short walk in the morning - no more than 5-10 minutes - then go home and rest. Go for another short walk or two later in the day, resting between each one. This will help to avoid stiffness of the muscles and joints. • You may still occasionally need to take a mild painkiller at this time. 	 	Not just yet

When can I have sex?

For many people, being able to have sex again is an important milestone in their recovery. There are no set rules or times about when it's safe to do so other than whether it feels OK to you - treat it like any other physical activity and build up gradually.

specific print instructions:

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Recovery tracker

Days Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
4–6 days	There should be very little pain now, though you will still feel tired as your body uses extra energy for healing.	Continue as on day 3, building up the number of activities you do around the house, perhaps going for a slightly longer walk each day. Keep track of your activities using the recovery diary on page 8 - build up slowly and steadily.		Getting there
7–13 days	You'll probably be able to do most things as normal, most of the time, but still get tired now and again.	<p>Continue to build up the amount of activity you're doing towards your normal levels. Monitor your progress using the recovery diary on page 11.</p> <p>Walking, swimming, cycling and light exercise are allowed as long as the wound is comfortable.</p> <p>After day 10, you might want to test your fitness to drive using the exercise on page 7.</p>		Normally after day 10, on light duties or reduced hours

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Recovery tracker

Days Post Op	How you might feel	Things you can do safely	Traffic light	Fit to work?
14+ days	You should be feeling stronger each day.	Talk to your doctor about going back to work (if you haven't already).		Yes
2-4 weeks		Most people who've had the operation will be back at work by now, unless there are special circumstances - for example, their job demands a lot of physical exertion and heavy manual work.		Yes
6 weeks		<p>If you haven't had any complications to do with your surgery, and you're still off work, it's possible that you're feeling anxious about returning to work and could do with a bit of help from your GP and your employer. Talk to them both about a gradual return to work.</p> <p>If you're off for too long, there's a risk of developing problems to do with anxiety, isolation, and lack of confidence. These could affect your quality of life in the long term. Talk to your doctor about how best to avoid this becoming a problem for you.</p>		Yes

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After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Activities: e.g. walked for ... mins	How much rest I needed after each activity:	What times I needed to rest	Went to bed at ... pm	How's your shoulder feeling?	How's your midriff feeling?	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								

Remember, take a step-by-step approach to getting better, and build up your activities in small stages. Don't push yourself too far, too fast. If you're concerned about anything, or if you feel you're not making progress fast enough, call your breast care nurse, your GP.

specific print instructions:

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After you get home

Day	Got up at ... am	Activities: e.g. walked for ... mins	How much rest I needed after each activity:	What times I needed to rest	Went to bed at ... pm	How's your shoulder feeling?	How's your midriff feeling?	What do you want to achieve tomorrow?
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								

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Keeping well

Because of your operation, the chances are you'll be a lot more aware of your body and how it works.

Right now is a really good time to build on the knowledge you've gained and make small changes to your lifestyle which can prevent you from experiencing certain health problems in the future. You can do this by:

- Improving your diet - get 5 portions of fresh fruit and veg per day.
- Any exercise – even if it's just a few short walks each day – really will make a difference to your health.
- Quit smoking - NHS Stop Smoking Services are one of the most effective ways to stop for good – and they're completely free. Your doctor will be happy to help you.

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Website links

The internet's a great thing – anything you want to know is there for you at the click of a mouse, but do be careful about the way you use it when it comes to getting information about your health. It's hard to know which sites to trust and none of them can tell you anything that's specific to your individual medical needs.

If you do want to know more about your operation, recovery or return to work, here is a list of trusted websites that offer safe, sensible, useful information:

The Royal College of Surgeons of England
<http://www.rcseng.ac.uk/>

Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland
<http://www.asgbi.org.uk/>

Association of Laparoscopic Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland
<http://www.alsgbi.org/>

NHS Stop Smoking Service
<http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>

NHS Choices
<http://www.nhs.uk/Pages/Homepage.aspx>

Department for Work and Pensions
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions>

GOV.UK
<https://www.gov.uk/>

DVLA - Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/driving/disability-health-condition>

Call 111 for nonemergency medical advice