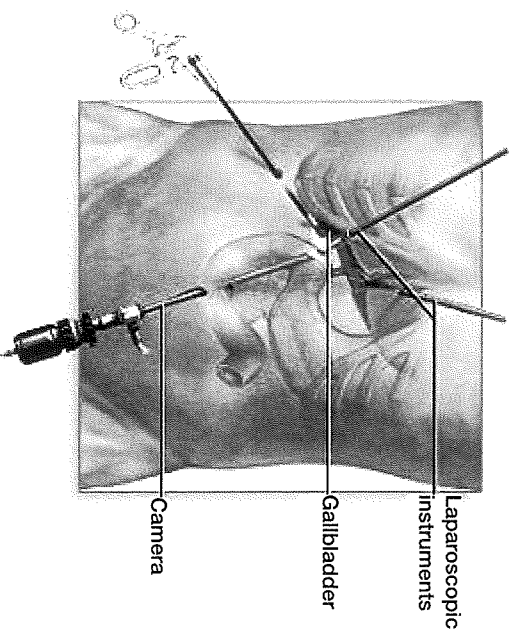


What does this mean?

Your gallbladder is removed using a special instrument called a Laparoscope. It is a tube with a light on the end that your surgeon uses to see the gallbladder. The gall bladder is then cut out using a special cutting tool and removed by grasping forceps.

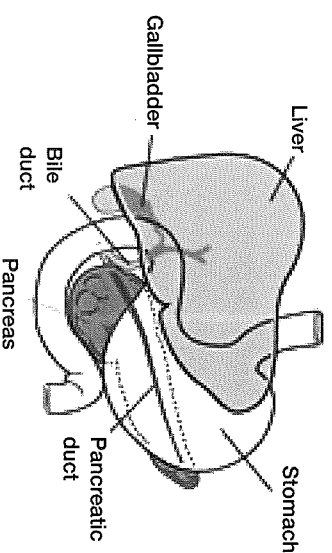
The advantages of having this type of operation compared to the usual type of gallbladder surgery is that you won't have a big cut in your stomach. The operation is carried out through four small 'holes' cut on your stomach near where your gallbladder is situated.

This results in less pain because your wound is that much smaller, and it also means you will usually be in hospital for a much shorter time (one to two days).



So what is your gallbladder?

It is a small pear-shaped sac tucked up under the liver up in the right-hand side of your abdomen.



Your gallbladder stores 'bile' which is used to breakdown the fats in your food. When you eat food, bile is squeezed out into a passage called the common bile duct. From there it goes in to your intestine where it works on the fat.

Sometimes people develop gallstones which form in the gallbladder. They usually end up blocking off the passage for bile to travel down. As a result, your gallbladder gets inflamed and very painful.

Eventually you will need to have an operation to get rid of the stones, hence the cholecystectomy.

Can you manage without your gallbladder?

Most certainly you can. Your gallbladder is only somewhere for the bile to be stored until it is needed. From the liver where bile is made it goes straight to your intestine to work on the fat in your food, instead of sidetracking in to the gallbladder, which is no longer there.

Before your operation

You will be seen by your doctor who will tell you why you need this surgery and who will also explain how they will do it.

You will need to sign a consent form which says you agree to have the operation. Make sure you are happy with the information you have been given before you sign. Your doctor will also explain the possibility of requiring a full 'open' cholecystectomy if she/he cannot complete the operation laparoscopically.

There will be a general workup to make sure you are ready for an anaesthetic and for the surgery itself.

You will not be allowed to eat anything for at least six hours before your operation. This is to help prevent you vomiting during or after the anaesthetic. You may drink water only up to 6am on the day of your surgery. If you have had a previous operation and were sick from the anaesthetic, please tell your anaesthetist.

The day of your surgery

Your nurse and an attendant will take you on your bed to the theatre where your care will be handed over to a theatre nurse. She/he will accompany you into the anaesthetic room which is adjacent to the operating theatre.



After the operation

You will wake up in the Recovery Room and from there be transferred back to your ward.

You will have an intravenous (IV) line in your arm to give you fluids and prevent you from becoming dehydrated. Since you will probably be allowed to start drinking once you are awake and feeling up to it, your IV line will probably be stopped.

It is not usually a painful operation, because you don't have muscles and nerves cut. The most pain you will get is from the gas used to blow up your stomach so the surgeon can see where to operate. Quite often you will experience shoulder tip discomfort until the gas reabsorbs, and this may take up to a week. Your nurse will make sure you have something for the pain. Please make sure it works for you and if not please let your nurse know so s/he can help.

Getting better

The after effects of this type of surgery are less than for the open procedure. You should be up walking around freely and eating a small amount of food within hours of the operation.

You may be discharged late in the day of the operation otherwise you will likely be discharged the following day.

Please ensure you have a driver organised for day of surgery and you have someone at home to keep an eye on you.

Advice on discharge:

If you are feeling quite well and your doctor is happy for you to do so, you may even return to work in a couple of days, although you may need to have up to a week off.

However, you must remember that you have had surgery and need to give your body time to recover. You will probably feel a little tired and lacking your usual energy for a day or two. Just take things slowly. Get plenty of rest. Also remember not to do any heavy lifting for about two weeks. (i.e. no mowing the lawn or digging in the garden or lifting heavy washing baskets etc).

If you have any problems such as continued tiredness, feeling unwell, fever, ongoing or worsening pain, please don't hesitate to contact your family doctor, who will be there to advise and help you.

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Laparoscopic cholecystectomy



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