

Discharge Instructions for Open Gallbladder Removal Surgery (Cholecystectomy)



Cholecystectomy is surgery to remove your gallbladder. You had it done as open surgery. This means it was done with 1 large incision instead of many small incisions as done in a laparoscopic cholecystectomy. You may have had an up-and-down (vertical) incision. This is done in the middle of your belly. Or you may have had a crosswise incision. This is done in the upper-right part of your belly beneath your ribs.

You can live a full and healthy life without your gallbladder. This includes eating the foods and doing the things you enjoyed before. Below are guidelines for home care after surgery.

Home care

To care for yourself at home:

- Get plenty of rest. Don't worry if you feel tired for the first couple of weeks after your surgery. Fatigue is common. Nap when you feel tired.
- Take medicines as advised by your healthcare provider.
- Wash the skin around your cut (incision) daily with mild soap and water. It's OK to shower the day after your surgery unless your healthcare provider says not to.
- If there is a gauze dressing on your incision, change it daily or as often as needed to keep it dry and clean.
- Eat your normal diet. But don't eat rich, greasy, or spicy food for a few days. Many surgeons advise a low-fat diet for the first month after surgery. Don't eat fried food during this time.
- You can walk around the house, do office work, climb stairs, or ride in a car if you feel able to do so.
- Ask someone to drive you to your appointments for the next week. Don't drive until you have stopped taking pain medicine. Make sure you can step on the brake pedal with no delay.
- Don't do any sports or hard physical activity for 4 weeks.
- Don't lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 4 weeks.
- Eat more fiber and drink plenty of fluids to prevent constipation. You may use a stool softener if you are constipated. Light activity, including walking, as advised by your healthcare provider may also help prevent constipation. Pain medicine can cause constipation. Talk with your provider if you need more help.
- Don't sit in a bathtub, swimming pool, or hot tub until your healthcare provider says it's safe. Wait until the incision site is healed and any surgical tubes (drains) are removed.
- Place a pillow firmly over your incision when you need to cough or sneeze to ease discomfort and protect your incision.
- Don't smoke or let people smoke in your house or car. Smoking and secondhand smoke can delay wound healing and put you at risk for infections.

Follow-up care

Make a follow-up appointment with your surgeon as advised. Call your healthcare provider if these symptoms don't go away within 1 week after your surgery:

- Extreme tiredness (fatigue)

- Pain around the incision
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Loss of appetite

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these:

- Yellowing of your skin or eyes (jaundice)
- Chills
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your provider
- Redness or swelling of the incision
- Fluid leaking or a bad smell from the incision
- Incision pain that gets worse
- Dark or rust-colored urine
- Stool that is light in color instead of brown
- Upset stomach (nausea) and vomiting
- Increasing belly pain
- Rectal bleeding
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent cough
- Leg swelling

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