

Reproductive Facts

Patient fact sheet developed by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine



Minimally Invasive Surgery

This fact sheet was developed in collaboration with the Society of Reproductive Surgeons (SRS)

Surgery is termed “minimally invasive” if it uses small or no incisions (cuts). Surgeons see your body’s organs with the help of small telescopes and cameras to diagnose problems and guide surgery.

Surgical repairs are made with very small instruments. Most problems can be treated at the time of diagnosis as one procedure.

Some common types of minimally invasive surgery are listed below:

- Laparoscopy involves placing a lighted telescope (called a laparoscope) with a camera into your belly through a very small incision in the belly button. This allows the surgeon to see inside your belly and pelvis.
- Robotic laparoscopy uses laparoscopic instruments controlled by a surgeon seated at a console. It allows for increased range of motion of the instruments.
- Hysteroscopy uses a lighted telescope (called a hysteroscope) that is inserted through the vagina and cervix (bottom of the uterus) to see the inside of the uterus (womb). There are no incisions made.

Benefits of minimally invasive surgery

Fewer scars on the outside

Scars from minimally invasive surgery are much smaller than in traditional open surgery. Laparoscopy involves a one-half to 1-inch incision near the belly button and 1 to 3 others in the lower belly. These incisions are usually 1/2 inch long. Hysteroscopy leaves no scar because the instrument goes through the natural opening from the vagina into the uterus.

Fewer scars on the inside

In general, all surgery can cause adhesions or scar tissue inside your lower belly (abdomen). These scars can cause

pain, problems with getting pregnant, or bowel blockage. Minimally invasive surgery may cause less scarring.

Quicker recovery

Minimally invasive surgery doesn’t usually require a patient to stay overnight in the hospital, compared to 2 to 4 days after open surgery. This reduces the risk of problems such as blood clots in the legs or infection.

Less pain, less medication

Because incisions are smaller, minimally invasive surgery is less painful than open surgery. This means that patients need less pain medication and recover more quickly.

Disadvantages of minimally invasive surgery

It's not suitable for everyone

Some minimally invasive surgery is riskier for patients who have had previous “open” surgery in the upper or lower part of their belly or those with other medical problems. The surgeon may have other reasons to choose open, not minimally invasive, surgery. Not all surgeries can be done with minimally invasive techniques.

Special training and equipment

Surgeons need special training before they can perform minimally invasive surgery. Not all doctors are qualified to do these types of procedures, and not all hospitals have the special equipment necessary to do some or all these kinds of surgeries.

You should speak to your doctor to find out what type of surgery is best for you.

Revised 2021, 2023