

LAPAROSCOPIC SURGERY - POST-OPERATIVE CARE Q&A FOR PATIENT ENQUIRIES

What pain should I expect and why?

The degree of pain or discomfort experienced by patients following surgery varies a great deal, however a certain amount of discomfort following any operation can be expected.

During the laparoscopic operation, carbon dioxide is used to inflate the abdomen to allow the surgeon adequate space in which to operate. This causes the abdominal wall to stretch giving rise to a dull pain which usually only lasts for 12 - 24 hours. Additionally, gas and/or fluid may irritate the diaphragm giving rise to shoulder tip pain in some patients. Any discomfort usually passes within 24 - 48 hours. There will be, understandably, pain and discomfort at each incision site but this should be relatively minor and not last longer than a few days.

What pain relievers will I require?

It is likely that you will need significantly less analgesia or pain relievers following laparoscopic surgery than traditional open surgery. After 48 hours, it is unusual for patients to require more than strong oral analgesics to reduce discomfort.

Patients should progressively improve following laparoscopic surgery. Any worsening pain at any time needs attention.

How much nursing care will I require after the operation?

One of the benefits of laparoscopic surgery is that there is no large cut. Patients have small incisions and nursing time is greatly reduced. There are generally no restrictions to bathing or mobility following an operation, however you are advised not to soak in a bath for the first few days following your operation. Small wounds may be treated with small plasters and many surgeons use absorbable sutures which will dissolve and you therefore will not need to have them removed. If your surgeon has used non-absorbable sutures, these will need to be removed after three to four days. This should not cause undue discomfort.

How long will I have to stay in hospital?

You should be able to leave hospital in a few days, however you should expect to experience some pain and discomfort after this time.

Will the operation cause bruising?

Some bruising around the incisions is inevitable. Some patients may suffer more extensive bruising which should disappear within two to three weeks.

When will I be mobile again?

Following most laparoscopic procedures you should be reasonably mobile by 12-24 hours. You should be fully mobile by 48 hours after surgery unless your surgery was particularly complex. Your surgeon will discuss this with you.

How long before I will be able to eat and drink after the operation?

For a day or two following some surgery it may be necessary to give fluid intravenously through a drip into a vein, however most patients will be able to eat and drink normally within 24-48 hours of an operation.

How long before I can have sex again?

For general laparoscopic surgery there are no restrictions on when to recommence sexual activity, however most patients may wish to wait for at least a week for initial discomfort to disappear. Patients undergoing a hysterectomy should consult with their doctor.

How long before I am able to drive again?

Generally, patients are encouraged to refrain from driving for a minimum of four weeks following open surgery. Following laparoscopic surgery you should only drive when comfortable. You should not drive a motor vehicle within 24 hours of the general anaesthetic.

Please ensure someone drives you home from the hospital.

Before driving check that your car insurance policy does not have an exclusion relating to major surgery.

When will I be able to return to work?

You should be able to return to normal activity within two or three weeks following surgery. Depending on the type of work that you do you may wish to return to work sooner. You should discuss this with your surgeon and providing you are feeling well, pain free and comfortable, there is no reason why you cannot return to work early.

When will I be able to resume sport and hobbies?

The rate of recovery varies for everyone. As a guide, it should be safe to start approximately two to three weeks after your surgery or perhaps slightly earlier for regular exercises, however before you begin any type of exercise please consult your doctor.

Once you have your doctor's approval beginner classes at the local gym may be a good way to begin building up your fitness again. Walking and swimming are also useful forms of exercise.



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Laparoscopic Information Service
by fax: 02 9928 1557
by mail: Level 16, 65 Berry Street
North Sydney NSW 2060

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