



Advice following laparoscopic (keyhole) abdominal surgery

This leaflet gives advice for patients and relatives on possible side effects and complications following laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery and tells you what to do if you experience any of the symptoms.

Why laparoscopic surgery rather than conventional ‘open’ surgery?

Laparoscopic abdominal surgery has many benefits for patients – in particular, a rapid and less uncomfortable recovery with a more speedy return to work. There are also smaller scars and fewer post-operative chest and blood clotting complications in comparison to open surgery.

What are the possible risks or complications of laparoscopic abdominal surgery?

- In rare incidences, part of the intestines or a blood vessel may be accidentally damaged. These injuries may not be seen at the initial surgery and the effects may not become apparent until 1-5 days following surgery.
- The most notable symptoms of these unintended complications are severe abdominal pain, a high temperature (greater than 38 °C), a very rapid pulse (quicker than 100 beats per minute), feeling faint or fainting on standing from a lying position, and difficulty in breathing.

If you experience any of the above symptoms, please seek urgent medical advice from your GP, NHS 111 or go to the nearest Emergency Department (A&E).

What to expect following laparoscopic surgery

Following laparoscopic surgery, it is common to experience some minor discomfort at the site of the small entry wounds and some stiffness in the abdominal wall. You may also have an ache or discomfort in your neck or shoulders due to the gas used to inflate your abdomen during the operation.

These symptoms will usually disappear within one or two days.

We advise you to take your normal painkillers, such as Paracetamol or Ibuprofen, following the dosage instructions on the packet. If your surgery requires stronger pain relief, this will be provided before you leave hospital. To learn more about your medicines, including possible side effects, please read the leaflet that comes with each medicine.

If you have any concerns or queries about your medication and any side effects, please call the ward or ask before you leave hospital.

When to seek medical advice

If you experience any of the following symptoms after you have left hospital, it is important that you contact the Surgical Assessment Unit in the first instance on 0118 322 7541 (if it is within 72 hours). After 72 hours, call your GP or NHS 111 for advice:

- Increasing abdominal pain that is not controlled by painkillers.
- Problems passing urine.
- Painful bloated abdomen.
- Fevers or chills.
- Nausea or vomiting.
- Increased bleeding or redness around the wound site.
- Reduction in appetite.
- Pain, redness or swelling in either calf.

Before leaving hospital please make sure you have a copy of your discharge letter – please remind your nurse if you are not given one. The information in the letter may be important if you need to contact the ward or NHS 111 outside of normal working hours.

Discharged from: Ward: _____ Tel: _____
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Surgical Assessment Unit Tel: 0118 322 7541

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

RBFT Department of General Surgery, May 2025

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