

# Having a laparoscopic (keyhole) hysterectomy

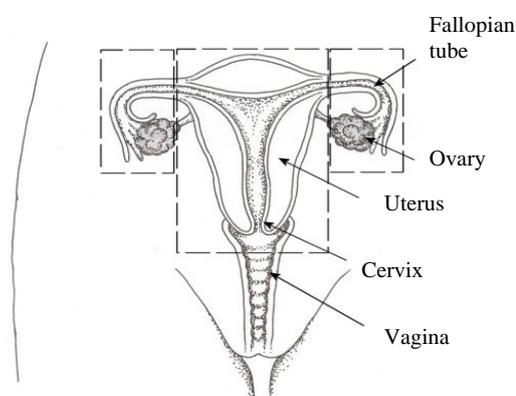
## Introduction

This leaflet is for women who have decided to have a laparoscopic hysterectomy (LH). It outlines the potential benefits and risks of this operation as well as what to expect during your recovery.

Feel free to discuss any questions or concerns with your nurse or telephone us on: 0118 322 7181.

## What is a hysterectomy?

A hysterectomy is the operation to remove a woman's womb (uterus). The operation is sometimes combined with the removal of one or both ovaries.



## Why is a hysterectomy sometimes necessary?

- Women sometimes have hysterectomies to treat a range of conditions, such as fibroids, heavy periods, prolapse, and cancer.
- Hysterectomy is often chosen when medical or other less invasive surgical treatments have failed or have been declined by the patient. You should discuss these alternatives with your doctor before deciding on hysterectomy.
- Conventional hysterectomy is carried out by open surgery (abdominal hysterectomy) – i.e. making a cut across the lower part of the tummy (abdomen) to remove the womb. A newer alternative to the abdominal hysterectomy is laparoscopic (keyhole) hysterectomy.

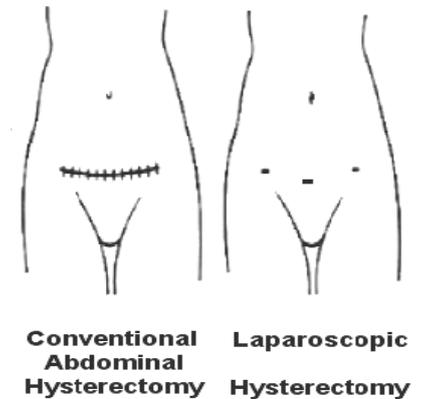
## What happens during a laparoscopic hysterectomy?

- The operation is performed under general anaesthetic (you will be asleep) and usually takes between one and two hours.
- Three or four small cuts (smaller than a thumbnail) are usually made in the abdomen.
- Gas (carbon dioxide) is passed into your abdomen to inflate the area, making access easier.
- A camera is used to see inside your abdomen.

- The surgeons remove the womb (and sometimes the ovaries) through a cut in the vagina.
- All the cuts are closed with dissolvable stitches.

Why have a laparoscopic hysterectomy (LH) rather than a traditional “open” hysterectomy? What are the advantages?

- The scars after LH are much smaller.
- There is less pain following LH.
- Hospital stay is shorter, on average 1 to 2 nights, after LH.
- Recovery time and the return to normal activity is shorter (usually 3 to 6 weeks) following LH.



Should I have my ovaries removed? What happens if my ovaries are removed before the menopause?

- Removal of the ovaries will bring on the menopause.
- You may experience some menopausal symptoms such as hot flushes.
- Your doctor should explain the advantages and disadvantages of removing or leaving your ovaries before your operation.

What are the risks or potential complications of laparoscopic hysterectomy (LH)?

- Infection: although we give antibiotics during the operation there is a small risk of infection in the bladder, chest, abdomen and wound sites.
- Blood clots: clots in the legs or lungs occur in less than 1 in 250 women who have LH.
- Bleeding: excessive bleeding is very uncommon during both types of hysterectomy. It is however, more common during LH than traditional hysterectomy. Approximately 1% (1 in 100) of patients having LH will need a blood transfusion.
- Internal injury: there is a greater risk of injury to the bladder and ureters (tubes connecting the kidneys to the bladder) during LH compared to traditional surgery. The risk of this occurring is approximately 1 in every 100 LH operations. Damage to other internal organs such as bowel or blood vessels occurs less often than 1 in 100 LH operations.
- Converting to open operation: in about 1 in 30 operations, it may be necessary to convert the keyhole hysterectomy (LH) to an open operation, either with a low horizontal cut or very rarely a central “up-and-down” cut (in the abdomen). This occurs if it is technically impossible to complete the LH or if a complication, such as bleeding occurs.

## What might I expect after laparoscopic hysterectomy?

- Abdominal (tummy) pain/(sometimes) shoulder tip pain. While in hospital, strong painkillers will control your pain. Simple painkillers such as Paracetamol and Ibuprofen (follow the dosage instructions on the packet) usually provide enough pain relief at home.
- Eating and drinking: You will normally be able to eat and drink within a few hours of your operation.
- You are likely to wake up with a tube that empties your bladder (catheter).
- Vaginal bleeding. You should expect slight vaginal bleeding (less than a period) for a few days after your operation.
- Patients normally stay in hospital for one or two nights following LH.
- Stitches. These will usually dissolve 10-14 days after your operation.

## Activity and work

- Week 1: Rest and gentle activity.
- Week 2: Light duties, e.g. desk work.
- Week 3: Gradually restart normal activities.
- Exercise: Light exercise can start from four to six weeks after your operation. Exercise level should increase gradually, reaching your normal levels six to ten weeks after your operation.
- Washing: For the first four weeks, shower or kneel in shallow water. Do this rather than soaking in the bath, to allow the internal wounds to heal without getting wet.
- Sex: Penetrative sex should be avoided for at least six weeks after your operation, to allow the internal wounds to heal sufficiently.
- Driving: Avoid driving for at least two weeks after your operation. Please check with your motor insurance company and make sure you can perform all the manoeuvres (including emergency stops) without pain before you restart driving.
- Cervical smears: When the uterus and cervix are removed, you no longer need to have smears unless your doctor advises otherwise.

## When should I call Sonning Ward?

Call Sonning Ward on 0118 322 7181 if:

- You experience severe pain or heavy bleeding within a week of your operation.
- You are concerned or have questions about your operation.

### When should I call my GP?

Call your GP if:

- The bleeding is prolonged (longer than 10 days).
- You experience a foul-smelling discharge.
- You feel unwell.

### Other related leaflets

- Abdominal hysterectomy.
- Quick guide to coming into hospital for surgery.

### Where can I find more information?

If you have any questions about this leaflet or other aspects of your care, please feel free to ask your doctor or members of the nursing staff.

- NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk/conditions/hysterectomy](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/hysterectomy)
- NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). Laparoscopic techniques for hysterectomy guidance [www.nice.org.uk/guidance/IPG239](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/IPG239)

For more information about the Trust, visit our website at [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

GYN\_635 Department of Gynaecology, June 2017.

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