



Post-Operative Instructions: Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy

These instructions provide general guidelines. Your surgeon will give you specific instructions tailored to your procedure. Always follow your surgeon's advice. Contact your surgeon immediately if you have any concerns.

After a laparoscopic cholecystectomy, you should rest, avoid heavy lifting, and eat a high-fiber diet. You should also keep the incision clean.

Rest and Activity

- Rest when tired, but avoid prolonged bed rest.
- Gentle exercise like walking is encouraged to prevent blood clots, starting the day after surgery.
- Avoid strenuous activities (jogging, weightlifting) for 10-15 days, or as advised by your surgeon. Avoid activities that cause pain or pull on incisions. Return to work will depend on your job's physical demands and your recovery progress. Discuss with your doctor when it's safe to drive (typically after a week, if not on strong pain medication and able to react quickly in emergencies).
- Use a pillow when moving or coughing to support your abdomen to decrease pain.

Diet

- Eat a high-fiber diet including fruits and vegetables.
- Drink plenty of fluids (8-10 glasses of water daily) to aid bowel movements.
- Avoid greasy, spicy, or rich foods for a few days to a month as advised by your surgeon.
- If you experience constipation, consider taking a stool softener or laxative as recommended by your doctor.

Wound Care

- Keep incisions clean and dry. Showering is usually permitted 24-48 hours post-op (unless otherwise instructed by your surgeon). If Steri-strips are used, cover incisions with plastic wrap during showers for the first week. Do not remove Steri-strips yourself; they will fall off naturally.
- Avoid soaking in bathtubs, hot tubs, or swimming pools until cleared by your doctor.
- Monitor for signs of infection (increased pain, swelling, redness, warmth, pus, fever, red streaks from the incision).

Medication

- Take pain medication as prescribed and follow instructions carefully.
- Take antibiotics as prescribed, completing the entire course.
- If stopping blood thinners before surgery, only restart as instructed by your doctor.

Other Instructions

- Have a responsible adult assist you for at least the first 24 hours after surgery.
- Your doctor will advise you regarding sexual activity.
- Attend your follow-up appointment.

When to Contact Your Doctor

- Fever above 101°F (38.3°C)
- Bleeding, redness, warmth, or yellow/green drainage from incisions
- Uncontrolled pain despite medication
- Difficulty breathing
- Persistent cough
- Inability to eat or drink
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin/eyes)
- Gray-colored stools

Recovery

Full recovery takes around 6 weeks for most, though most can return to normal activities within 1-2 weeks for laparoscopic surgery and 4-6 weeks for open surgery. This timeframe can vary among individuals.

You may have some of these normal symptoms as you recover:

- Pain in your belly. You may also feel pain in one or both shoulders. This pain comes from the gas still left in your belly after the surgery. The pain should ease over several days to a week.
- A sore throat from the breathing tube. Throat lozenges may be soothing.
- Nausea and maybe throwing up (vomiting). Your surgeon can provide you with nausea medicine if needed.
- Loose stools after eating. This may last 4 to 8 weeks. However, in some cases it can last longer.
- Bruising around your wounds. This will go away on its own.
- Skin redness around your wounds. This is normal if it is just around the incision.