

# Laparoscopy – Post-operative care

---

## Length of Stay

Laparoscopy is normally a day stay procedure; however, an overnight stay may be required if the surgery is complex or lengthy.

## Personal Care

It will take you about a week to recover following a laparoscopy. You should have someone with you when you go home from the procedure and take approximately one week off from work. Wear loose-fitting, comfortable clothes during the first few weeks after your procedure.

You should only resume driving once you feel strong enough to be able to slam on the brakes in an emergency. Your car insurance provider will have their own policy and may not cover you if you have had recent surgery. I recommend checking their policy prior to getting back behind the wheel.

Avoid using anything vaginally for two weeks following surgery. Avoid using tampons, swimming pools, spa baths, baths or having sexual intercourse.

## Bleeding

You will likely have a small amount of bleeding after your procedure. It should not be heavier than a light menstrual period and will resolve spontaneously within a week.

Surgical manipulation can disrupt the normal timing of menstruation. You may get your period earlier or later than expected.

## Wound care

Keep your wounds dry and clean. No special creams or ointments are needed. Your incisions are closed with a suture underneath the skin, which will dissolve on its own. The dressings are waterproof, and you can shower with them. Keep the dressings on until they start to peel at the edge, once this occurs remove in the shower.

Some patients will develop bruises at the incision sites, these will resolve by itself. Pain around the incision sites is not uncommon and will resolve over several days.

## **Diet**

You may eat whatever you feel you can tolerate. You may experience some residual nausea from the anaesthesia or pain medication which may decrease your appetite. It is most important to remain hydrated and clear liquids are usually most easily tolerated.

## **Activity**

Depending on the type of procedure performed, most patients can return to their normal activities within 1-2 weeks after their laparoscopy. You may find that you tire more easily because of the surgery and anaesthesia. It is best to avoid strenuous activity for about a week after surgery, although there are no specific restrictions.

## **Pain**

It is normal to have some pain (including shoulder tip pain) post-surgery. Taking regular analgesia, e.g., paracetamol (Panadol®) every four to six hours will help to keep your pain under control. A maximum of only eight paracetamol tablets per day is advised. Additionally, to help with cramps, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen (Advil®, Nurofen®) may assist in dealing with pain. You may be provided with a script for some stronger opioid medication, this should be limited to the first 1-2 days post procedure as it can cause constipation.

Pain management efforts are most successful if you take the medication as soon as you begin to experience discomfort rather than waiting until the pain is severe. Most patients find that their pain resolves spontaneously within a few days.

## **Abdominal bloating**

Some degree of abdominal distension (swelling) is to be expected after surgery. This is due to distension of the intestines and resolves over time. Manipulation of bowels during laparoscopic surgery can leave the bowels 'stunned'. General anaesthesia can also slow down the bowels, preventing the passage of gas and stool. Walking encourages the peristaltic movement of the bowels, relieving gas, and constipation. A heat pack may also provide relief. Peppermint tea is useful to help gastrointestinal motility and relieve abdominal cramping.

## **Follow-up**

Please call the North Preston specialists (Phone: 03 9056 9122) to arrange a follow-up appointment in 2 weeks.

## **When to seek advice**

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please seek medical advice.

- Sudden shivers or chills, hot flushes or sweating, fever (>38 degrees) and feeling generally unwell.
- Unusual shortness of breath or chest pain.
- Severe pain not relived by pain medication.
- Heavy or prolonged vaginal bleeding or large clots (especially if bright red). It is not normal to have bleeding that soaks a pad within one hour more than once.
- Offensive smelling, or unusual coloured vaginal discharge.
- Burning, stinging, excessive frequency or inability to pass urine.
- Tenderness and/or swelling or a hot sore area in the calf muscles.