Recovering from Your Gallbladder Surgery

The gallbladder is a small pouch sitting under your liver that acts like a storage tank for bile, a fluid that helps you digest fatty foods. Sometimes, an imbalance in this fluid causes inflammation or stones to form, which can block the flow of bile and trigger severe pain, nausea, and bloating after meals. Removing the gallbladder fixes this issue. This guide will help you recover safely and comfortably following your surgery.

Restrictions

- Do not submerge your wounds in water (e.g. pools, ocean, baths or saunas) until they are healed (2-3 weeks).
- Do not drink alcohol, use recreational drugs or make legal decisions for the first 48 hours.
- Do not drive for 7-10 days after surgery.
- Do not fly for 3 weeks after surgery, unless cleared to do so.
- Do not lift more than 5kg for 6 weeks after surgery.
- Do not undertake strenuous exercise such as cycling, jogging, weightlifting, or competitive sports for 6 weeks after surgery.
- You can go for short walks and increase gradually.
- You may resume sexual activity after 1-2 weeks if you feel comfortable.
- Plan to return to work after 1-2 weeks. If your job involves heavy lifting, you will need longer.

Managing Pain

Pain varies for everyone and most pain will improve with pain-relief and rest. It is normal to have shoulder-tip pain and a sensation of bloating; this is from the gas used during surgery. We generally recommend the following pain management strategy; however, this will be individualised based on your medications and medical history. If you need additional pain relief, please contact our rooms to speak to the nurse.

Mild to Moderate Pain:

- Take regular paracetamol PLUS your prescribed anti-inflammatory according to the instructions on the box.

Severe Pain:

- Take paracetamol PLUS your prescribed anti-inflammatory PLUS Palexia (tapentadol) or Endone (oxycodone) according to the instructions on the box.
- **NOTE**: Palexia/Endone can cause sleepiness, dizziness, nausea/vomiting and constipation. Do not drive while taking these medications.

Preventing Complications

Avoid constipation: This is common after surgery. Be proactive! Take laxatives (Movicol, Coloxyl with Senna or Metamucil) if you have not opened your bowels in >24 hours.

Avoid blood clots: Some people are more at risk of developing blood clots after surgery. We suggest frequent walking and leg movements. If you usually take a blood thinning medication, you should resume this as instructed.

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Warning Signs: When to Call for Help

Call us or see your GP if you experience:

- Increased pain that is not relieved by medication.
- Redness, swelling or heat spreading around the wound or thick or smelly discharge/pus.
- Fevers, chills or generally feeling unwell with flu-like symptoms.
- Inability to pass urine, gas or stool
- New pain or swelling in your calves, chest pain or shortness of breath

If you are unable to reach us or it is after-hours. Please attend your local emergency department or dial 000 if it is an emergency.

Special Instructions for Gallbladder Surgery

Diet: Some patients will become fat intolerant for a period of time after gallbladder removal. This results in diarrhoea, bloating, nausea or abdominal cramping after consuming fatty foods. You may be discharged from hospital on a low-fat diet for a week or two after surgery.

- If you are experiencing severe diarrhoea, reduce the fat content in your diet (low-fat diet) until symptoms improve.
- If you have mild but tolerable diarrhoea, then continue eating a normal diet.
- If you do not have any diarrhoea then you may eat what you desire.

Wound Care

You will be discharged with water resistant dressings. These should remain in place until review with our clinic or as advised. They don't need to be changed unless they become wet underneath. You can shower normally but do not scrub at your dressings. Pat dry if they get wet.

Your Next Appointment

Our clinic nurse will see you about two weeks after your surgery. You should keep your dressings on until your appointment unless otherwise instructed. Please call 02 9997 7346 to book this follow-up appointment if you do not already have one.

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