

POST-OPERATIVE ADVICE

Cholecystectomy



What are the gallbladder and cholelithiasis?

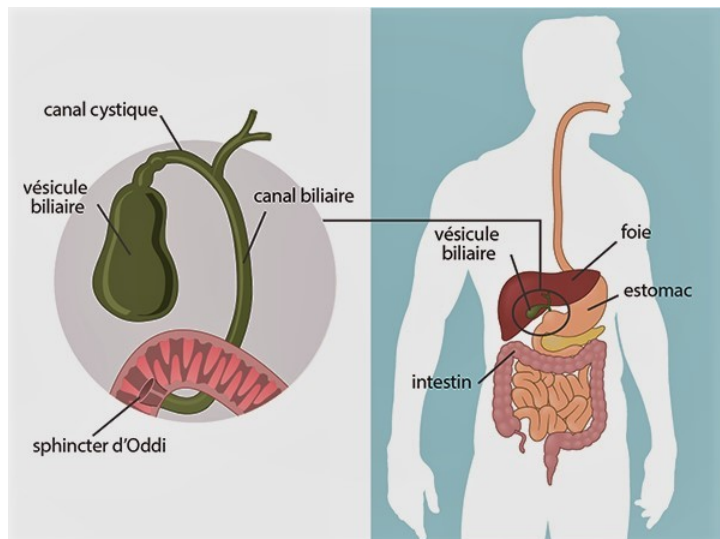
The gallbladder is a small pouch-shaped organ that stores bile secreted from the liver to help in the digestion and absorption of fats in the intestine. At mealtime, the gallbladder contracts to release bile.

Cholelithiasis is a medical condition characterized by the formation of stones (calculi) in the gallbladder, called gallstones. Gallstones can sometimes block the biliary tract and obstruct the flow of bile, causing pain. Without the gallbladder, the liver continues to function normally by secreting bile directly into the intestine.

Laparoscopic cholecystectomy

This surgery consists of removing the gallbladder and the stones it contains using a laparoscope (camera) and surgical instruments inserted into the abdomen, through 4 small incisions. The procedure is done under general anesthesia and takes 45 to 60 minutes.

If the surgery is planned ahead of time (elective surgery) it is done in day surgery. This means that you arrive in the morning and leave the same day. If your situation is an emergency, depending on the time of day of the surgery, you may have to spend the night in hospital.



If you have any questions, please refer to these telephone numbers:

Info-Santé: 811

Day surgery: 450-654-7525, ext. 22118

Outpatient general surgery clinic: 450 654-7525, ext.
22125

Resuming your activities

On the evening of your surgery, you can walk normally and go up stairs. The duration of your leave from work will depend on your job (physical work vs. telework). You can discuss this with your surgeon.

Respect load limitation. You can resume physical effort in a controlled gradual way. Do not forget to bend your knees when lifting objects from the ground. Physical activity, like sports, are permitted after 4 weeks of recovery. You are encouraged to stay active to promote your recovery.

Driving

You can drive as soon as your pain is well controlled and you are no longer taking narcotic pain fillers.

Travel

You must not travel outside the province within the first 30 days. Please check with your insurer and your surgeon.

Medical leave

Your doctor's note will be given to you when you are discharged, if applicable. If you have an insurance form to complete, please send it by fax to 450- or submit it to the office of outpatient surgical clinics on the 2nd floor, B

(Do not forget to indicate your name, file #, the name of your surgeon and a telephone number where you can be reached.)

Post-operative advice

Signs and symptoms to watch for:

When you return home, make sure to watch for the following symptoms:

- ➔ You have excessive abdominal pain that continues to increase even with pain medication
- ➔ Sustained fever (38°C or 101°F) for more than 24 hours
- ➔ You are unable to eat or drink (e.g., persistent vomiting) for more than 24 hours
- ➔ Greenish discharge
- ➔ Persistent bleeding from the wound
- ➔ Redness around the wound that continues to increase for more than 48 hours

Pain management

It is normal to feel pain in your abdomen when you go home. It is important to take your prescribed medication if the pain prevents you from carrying out your daily tasks. You can combine acetaminophen with your opioid analgesic for optimal effect.

You can apply an ice pack or a hot pack to help relieve pain.

It is important not to drink alcohol while taking pain medication. Driving is also prohibited while taking an opioid analgesic.

Wound care

- ➔ **If you have a dressing when you are discharged, the nurse will explain how to remove it yourself (usually 48 hours after surgery).**
- ➔ **Wound closure strips will fall off on their own within 7 to 14 days. If they are still attached after 14 days, you can remove them.**
- ➔ You can start massaging your scars 3 weeks after your surgery if there is no discharge and if the wound is completely closed. You can use an unscented moisturizing cream.
- ➔ You can take a shower as soon as your dressing has been removed, your wound is completely closed and there is no discharge.
- ➔ You can take a bath and use a spa or pool 10 days after your surgery, if your wound is completely closed and there is no discharge.
- ➔ In some cases, the surgeon may decide to leave a drain in place. The day surgery nurse will teach you how to empty it. The CLSC will contact you about dressing care.

Diet and elimination

You can resume your regular diet very quickly after your surgery. If you do not have specific instructions, you can eat regular meals, according to your tolerance, once you are home.

Continue with a protein-rich and energy-rich diet during your convalescence. This will speed up your recovery!

Drink a lot of water (8 to 10 glasses a day if you do not have a fluid restriction).

If, despite this advice, you experience constipation, you can take a mild laxative like docusate sodium (Colace), psyllium fiber (Metamucil®) or polyethylene glycol (Lax-a-day®).

These products are sold over the counter in pharmacies. Your pharmacist can also make suggestions. If you are suffering from kidney insufficiency, talk to your pharmacist.

Note! If you are taking a narcotic analgesic, you are more likely to suffer from constipation.

About 20-25% of people who have had a cholecystectomy will have mild to moderate diarrhea that is often temporary, and can resolve within 3 months following surgery. If diarrhea persists, inform your surgeon at your follow-up appointment.