

Gallbladder Surgery

(Cholecystectomy)

For an appointment call
1-888-UCH-0200

The gallbladder is a small sac that rests beneath the right side of the liver. The gallbladder's main purpose is to collect bile, the body's digestive agent. The gallbladder releases bile that travels through the bile ducts to the small intestine.

Gallbladder problems are usually caused by the presence of gallstones, small hard masses often consisting of cholesterol and bile salts that form in the gallbladder or bile duct. These stones may block the flow of bile out of the gallbladder. As a result, the gallbladder begins to swell, which results in sharp abdominal pain, vomiting, and indigestion. In addition, gallstones may promote inflammation and infection of the gallbladder.

Causes and Treatment Options

Some gallstones can be managed with medication or dietary adjustments, such as drastically cutting down on fat intake. When severe obstruction of the gallbladder occurs, removal of the organ is the only option.

Gallbladder removal is one of the most commonly performed surgical procedures in the United States. Traditionally, the only way to remove the gallbladder was through a large abdominal incision. This resulted in significant pain, a six-to-nine-inch scar, a lengthy hospital stay of five to eight days, and a recovery period of four to six weeks. Now, more than 90 percent of all gallbladder surgeries are performed through a minimally invasive procedure called laparoscopic surgery.

Minimally Invasive Surgery Used to Remove the Gallbladder

Surgeons perform the procedure through four tiny incisions, each about a quarter-inch long. A surgical instrument called a laparoscope is inserted through the incisions. A video camera at the end of the laparoscope allows the surgeon to see a magnified view of the patient's gallbladder and other internal organs on a video monitor. The surgeon then manipulates surgical

instruments, brought to the operative site through small, hollow tubes. The surgeon first stops the blood flow to the gallbladder by sealing the cystic artery and cystic duct, then cuts the cystic artery and duct which free the gallbladder for removal. The remaining bile and gallstones are suctioned out of the gallbladder, which then deflates like a balloon. Using special graspers, the surgeon gently removes the deflated gallbladder through the navel.

In most cases, patients leave the hospital the same day or the day after laparoscopic gallbladder surgery, and return to normal activity within three to seven days.

The Minimally Invasive Surgery Center

The University of Chicago Hospitals Minimally Invasive Surgery Center at Louis A. Weiss Memorial Hospital is at the forefront of laparoscopic surgery. Surgeons here are pioneers in advancing minimally invasive diagnostic and therapeutic surgical procedures, many of which are now performed all over the world. For example, Constantine Frantzides, MD, Director of the Minimally Invasive Surgery Center, was the first in the world to pioneer eight different new laparoscopic procedures.

OVERVIEW

Laparoscopic, or minimally invasive, surgery to remove the gallbladder offers many benefits over traditional open surgery, such as:

- **Reduced hospital stay to either same-day release or only one day**
- **A quicker return to work and other activities within three to seven days.**
- **Only four tiny marks as opposed to a nine-inch scar.**
- **Minimal postoperative pain.**

Specialists from general surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, urology, ophthalmology, orthopaedics, plastics, and thoracic and vascular surgery all work together to offer a full spectrum of minimally invasive surgeries from gallbladder and hernia procedures to surgery of the spine, spleen, stomach, colon, and other organs. These specialists also collaborate to apply laparoscopic technology to other procedures that currently require traditional open surgery.

For a consultation or second opinion with one of our minimally invasive surgical specialists, contact your primary care physician or call toll-free 1-888-UCH-0200.

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