

Cholecystectomy: What to Expect at Home

Your Recovery

After your surgery, it is normal to feel weak and tired for several days after you return home. Your belly may be swollen. If you had laparoscopic surgery, you may also have pain in your shoulder for about 24 hours.

You may have gas or need to burp a lot at first, and a few people get diarrhea. The diarrhea usually goes away in 2 to 4 weeks, but it may last longer.

For a laparoscopic surgery, most people can go back to work or their normal routine in 1 to 2 weeks, but it may take longer, depending on the type of work you do.

How can you care for yourself at home?

Activity

Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.

Try to walk each day. Start out by walking a little more than you did the day before. Gradually increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.

For about 2 to 4 weeks, avoid lifting anything that would make you strain. This may include heavy grocery bags and milk containers, a heavy briefcase or backpack, cat litter or dog food bags, a child, or a vacuum cleaner.

Avoid strenuous activities, such as biking, jogging, weightlifting, and aerobic exercise, until your doctor says it is okay.

You may drive when you are no longer taking pain medicine and can quickly move your foot from the gas pedal to the brake. You must also be able to sit comfortably for a long period of time, even if you do not plan to go far. You might get caught in traffic.

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Diet

Eat smaller meals more often instead of fewer larger meals. You can eat a normal diet, but avoid eating fatty foods for about 1 month. Fatty foods include hamburger, whole milk, cheese, and many snack foods. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.

Drink plenty of fluids (unless your doctor tells you not to).

If you have diarrhea, try avoiding spicy foods, dairy products, fatty foods, and alcohol. You can also watch to see if specific foods cause it, and stop eating them. If the diarrhea continues for more than 2 weeks, talk to your doctor.

You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fiber supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.

Incision care

Remove bandaids in 48hrs

Leave steri-strips on for a week or until it falls off.

After 24 hours, wash the area daily with warm, soapy water, and pat it dry.

Keep the area clean and dry. You may cover it with a gauze bandage if it weeps or rubs against clothing. Change the bandage every day.