
Discharge Instructions: Liver Resection

A liver resection (partial hepatectomy) is surgery to remove a part of the liver. It's most often done to remove cancerous (malignant) tumors in the liver. Less often, the surgery is done to remove certain non-cancerous (benign) tumors in the liver. Sometimes, part of a healthy liver is removed to be transplanted into a sick person who needs a liver transplant. The part of the liver left behind must also be healthy.

Within a few months after the surgery, the liver can grow back to near its original size.

Full recovery from open liver resection can take 4 to 8 weeks. Laparoscopic surgery recovery is often faster.

Home care

Once at home, follow all your doctor's instructions. Be sure to:

- Take medicines as directed. These may include antibiotics and pain medicine.
- Care for your incisions as instructed. This includes keeping the incisions dry when bathing or showering.
- Get plenty of rest. But also walk at least a few times daily. Slowly increase your pace and distance as you feel able.
- Don't do any heavy lifting or strenuous activities until your surgeon says it's OK to do so.
- Don't drive until your surgeon says it's OK.
- Eat enough protein to help your recovery and heal your incisions.
- After a liver resection, you'll need to stay away from alcohol and certain medicine for a time while your liver recovers. How long this is needed depends on the health of your liver.
- If you have cancer, your doctor may recommend other treatments such as radiation or chemotherapy after surgery. These treatments help kill any stray cancer cells that remain in the body. They may also help keep cancer cells from coming back. Your doctor can tell you more about these treatments if they're needed.
- If you are sent home with a drainage tube in the surgical area, your surgeon and nurse will teach you how to care for it.

Follow-up

Keep all appointments with your surgeon. These let your surgeon check how well you're healing. If your drain, stitches, or staples need to be removed, this is often done within 2 weeks after surgery. If other treatments are needed, these will likely start soon after surgery.

When to call your healthcare provider

After you get home, call your healthcare provider if you have:

- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher that lasts longer than 24 hours
- Increased pain, redness, swelling, bruising, bleeding, or drainage at any incision sites
- Nausea or vomiting
- Pain in your belly (abdomen) or near your right shoulder blade that gets worse
- Swollen belly
- Jaundice (yellow eyes, skin)
- Constipation
- Signs of blood clots in the arm or leg. These include your arm or leg feeling warm, tender, swelling and warmth.
- Any other symptoms your provider tells you to watch for

Call 911

Call 911 if any of these occur:

- Unusual bleeding that you can't easily control
- Vomiting blood
- A lot of blood in your stool or large amount of black or tarry stool
- You feel very dizzy or lightheaded
- Loss of consciousness
- Any chest pain
- Trouble breathing or very short of breath