

Cholecystectomy: Before Your Surgery

A cholecystectomy is surgery to remove your gallbladder. The gallbladder stores digestive fluid from the liver—called bile.

Gallstones may block bile inside the gallbladder, which can make the area swollen and painful.

So your doctor may want to remove your gallbladder.

Your body will work fine without a gallbladder. Instead of bile being stored, bile will move straight through to help digest your food.

Now, here's how the surgery is done. First, you'll get medicine to make you sleep.

A cholecystectomy is usually done as laparoscopic surgery.

That means the doctor makes a few small cuts, called incisions, in your belly, then puts a scope and other tools through the cuts to take out your gallbladder.

Then the doctor closes the cuts with stitches or staples.

The cuts will heal quickly and leave scars that usually fade over time.

Most people go home the same day.

Sometimes the doctor will make one larger cut in the belly.

This is called open surgery.

The recovery will take longer, and you may need to stay in the hospital for a few days.

Be sure you bring an adult friend or family member to drive you home.

Anesthesia and pain medicine make it unsafe for you to drive after your surgery.

Before the surgery, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, especially blood thinners, like aspirin.

Some can raise the risk of bleeding or cause problems with anesthesia.

Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before surgery.

Always follow your doctor's directions for preparing, including when or if you should stop eating and drinking.

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As you can imagine, hospitals need to know without any doubt that they're doing surgery on the right person.

So bring your photo ID and any paperwork your hospital asked for.

Surgery can be stressful.

But it will help you get better and feel well again.