



Recovering from keyhole surgery

What is it?

Laparoscopic, or keyhole surgery, involves 3-4 small incisions (cuts) up to 1cm long in the abdomen (stomach). A small tube lets a camera and light into the abdomen so the surgeon can see what they are doing.

All surgeries have some risk, but keyhole surgery is often used because people recover faster, have less pain, less bleeding and less scarring.

How long will it take to recover?

Full recovery usually takes about two weeks. You can eat and drink as soon as you like after the surgery. People usually can go home that day, but you may feel tired for a day or two.

You should not drive for at least 24 hours after the surgery and then only if your wounds and pain are not stopping you. You may also not open your bowels (poo) for a day or two.

A nurse from the hospital will call you the night after surgery and again the next morning. They are checking to make sure you are doing ok. If they have concerns, they may tell you to see your GP or go to the emergency department.

Most people can go back to work after 1-2 weeks, depending on how much physical activity your job requires.

Will I have pain after?

Keyhole surgery usually involves less pain than open surgery. People often feel some shoulder pain for up to 24 hours. This is due to the gas used to inflate the stomach during the operation.

The small incisions on your stomach have dissolving stitches in them. These will be covered by a dressing. Try to keep them clean and dry for 48 hours. After that, you can take off the dressings and bathe and shower as normal.

There may be some pain in your stomach, and you will be given pain relief you need it before you leave the hospital. You will also be given pain relief tablets to take home.

Where can I learn more?

- **Healthdirect** - Laparoscopy: healthdirect.gov.au
- **National Health Service (UK)** - Laparoscopy: nhs.uk



When should I call someone?

For the first two days after surgery, you should call the clinic if you have concerns. After that, you should contact your GP if:

You have a fever over 38°C that won't go down

Your stomach keeps swelling

Your pain is getting worse

You have nausea or vomiting that won't stop

You are getting chills

You keep coughing or feeling short of breath

Your incisions are bleeding or leaking pus

The skin around the incisions is red or getting bigger