

Laparotomy

Patient Information

Women's Health Service

Surname: NHI:

First Names:

Date of Birth: / / Sex:

PLACE PATIENT ID HERE



Going Home

You will usually be able to go home within 48-72 hours after your operation. You will need to arrange for someone to drive you home. You should have someone stay with you for at least the first 24 hours.

Some side effects following anaesthesia may include; sore/dry throat, or a slight cough. This usually resolves within a few days. Nausea, discomfort and tiredness are common side effects during the first few days following surgery. Anaesthesia can affect your co-ordination and judgement skills.

Pain Relief

You will need to take regular pain relief for at least the first week when you are discharged home. Then gradually wean off the regular day time doses and take when needed. Continue the night time doses for longer.

Activity and Exercise

You will need to take it easy for a few days. You will usually be able to return to work within 2-4 weeks, but this depends on the exact treatment you have. A full recovery can take 4-6 weeks. It is important for your recovery that you have some gentle exercise each day. More strenuous exercise and daily activities should be restricted for six weeks.

You may start driving when you are able to move from side to side, can do an emergency stop without any pain and you are no longer taking any strong pain killers.

You can start sexual activity again after 4-6 weeks.

Bowel Care

Constipation (not being able to poo) can be a problem for some people after an anaesthetic.

Include plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and at least 8 glasses of water a day in your diet to keep your bowel habits regular.

Alpine tea and Kiwicrush may be helpful.

If you have problems with constipation, please check that your discharge medication includes laxatives.

Wound Care

Your wound will be closed with either stitches or staples. If you have staples these will usually need to be removed on day 7-10 after your surgery and you will need to make an appointment with your GP nurse to have these removed. Your nurse will provide you with a staple clip remover on discharge to take with you to your GP nurse appointment. If you have stitches it is likely these will be dissolving and will dissolve (disappear) on their own. If your stitches do need to be removed this is usually done day 7-10 post surgery also by your GP nurse and will be discussed with you.

You can shower as normal, it is important that your wound is kept clean and you pat it completely dry with a clean towel after showering. Do not use soap directly on your wound or put creams, powders or perfume near your wound while it is still healing as these can irritate the skin.

Vaginal Bleeding

If you have had a Hysterectomy, you may have some light vaginal bleeding, spotting or brown discharge up to 4-6 weeks after surgery. This is normal as long as it is not unpleasant smelling. If it is unpleasant smelling, this could be because of an infection and you may need to be treated with antibiotics.

If you have heavy, bright red bleeding and you are filling one sanitary pad every hour, please contact the Women's Health Acute Assessment Unit, or your local Emergency Department.

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It is important to use pads instead of tampons and AVOID swimming or hot tub soaks until you have stopped bleeding to avoid infection.

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

If your ovaries have been removed during your operation, you may be offered hormone replacement therapy (HRT). This will be discussed with you by your gynaecologist and together you can decide the best way forward.

Smears

If you had abnormal smears prior to your hysterectomy, you may need to continue having regular smear tests from the top of the vagina. Please discuss this with your Doctor or Nurse prior to discharge home.

Emotions

If you have had your ovaries removed, you may start to feel symptoms of menopause. These include feeling emotional, flushes, night sweats, dry vagina and itchy skin. These are normal symptoms caused by a drop in your oestrogen hormone levels.

However, every woman is different and you may not have any symptoms. If these symptoms are affecting your daily life, please discuss these with your doctor or nurse

Sexuality

You may feel a sense of loss at losing a part of your female identity, this is an understandable emotion. It can be helpful to talk about this with friends or family, your partner or the nurses and doctors.

It takes about 4-6 weeks for your body to heal after your operation and it might be some time before you enjoy sex. There are other ways of being close with your partner which you can explore together.

Complications to look out for

We particularly want you to tell us if:

- You have increasing pain not controlled by pain relief
- You have a fever (temperature).
- Your wound is bleeding and will not stop.

- Your wound is red or warm to the touch.
- You have thick and/or smelly ooze from your wound.
- You have heavy vaginal bleeding or unpleasant smelling discharge.
- You are constipated or unable to pass urine.
- You have on-going nausea (feeling sick) or vomiting.
- You notice one or both of your calf/s has become sore to touch, is red or there is an increase in size of your calf/s.

Discharge and Follow-up

Following your operation the doctor will tell you of their findings. Your discharge summary is provided to you and your GP. Please check your discharge summary for details of your follow-up appointment.

At this time your recovery will be assessed and any results will be discussed.

Most women do not have any problems following a Laparotomy.

If you have any concerns regarding your post operative recovery, please contact the **Gynaecology Ward/Womens Health Assessment Unit** on **04 806 0740 (24 hour coverage)**.

Contact number if you have not heard about lab results and if you need a follow up appointment.

**Women's Clinics Reception
Level 3
Wellington Regional Hospital
Phone: 04 806 0760**

Reception will either take a message or forward to the Clinic Nurse for the Specialist whose care you are assigned.