After a Laparoscopy: What you need to know

BC WOMEN'S HOSPITAL+ HEALTH CENTRE
Provincial Health Services Authority

What is a laparoscopy?

During a laparoscopy, a doctor makes 1 to 4 small cuts in the abdomen. Usually, one cut is in the belly button and the others are in the lower abdomen.

Then, the doctor inserts a thin, lighted tube called a **laparoscope**. This tube is connected to a video camera. The camera allows the doctor to see the uterus, ovaries, bladder, and other organs.

Depending on your needs, a laparoscopy usually takes 1 – 3 hours. The doctor will close the cuts with dissolvable stitches, or surgical tape called steri-strips.

What to expect after surgery

You will have a general anesthetic (completely asleep) for this surgery.

- You may have an oxygen mask over your nose and mouth when you wake up.
- You may have a sore throat for a few days. This is normal and usually goes away on its own.
- For 1-2 days, your abdomen may be bloated. This is gas left over from the surgery. The gas can cause discomfort in the upper chest, shoulder, or back. Short walks can help relieve the discomfort.

What can I do?

- You may not feel like yourself for the first day. Rest in bed until you feel better. DO NOT do other activities for the rest of the day.
- If you feel nauseous, try sips of ginger ale and eat some dry crackers. If you feel like eating, try small amounts of food that are easy to digest, like soups and cereals. Drink lots of fluids for 2-3 days, when you can.

How can I keep myself safe?

- If you go home on the day of surgery, we recommend that you leave the hospital with a responsible adult.
- For 24 hours after surgery:
    - **DO NOT** drive, operate heavy machinery or make important decisions.
    - **DO NOT** drink alcohol or use recreational substances. The effects will add to those of the surgery medications.

Caring for yourself at home

- **Activity:** On the day of your surgery, rest. You may then slowly return to your normal activities over the next 7 days.
    - Avoid strenuous activities such as heavy lifting (over 10 pounds), exercise, and housework (vacuuming) for 6 weeks.
- **Bleeding:** Light vaginal bleeding is normal after this surgery. Use a pad until the bleeding stops. Do not use tampons. If your incisions are bleeding, apply firm pressure for 10 minutes, or until the bleeding stops.
- **Sexual activity:** Do not insert anything in your vagina until you speak to your doctor.
- **Hygiene:** You may see a red colour on your skin from the skin cleanser used for surgery. Leave this on for 72 hours to reduce risk of infection.
    - Always clean your hands before touching your bandages. If you have square bandages, remove them after 24 hours. Leave surgical tape (steri-strips) on for 7 days.
    - If there is a small amount of bleeding from the incisions, apply a clean bandage on top of the steri-strips.
    - Do not go in a bathtub, hot tub, or swimming pool until your wounds are fully healed.

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- You may shower 24 hours after your surgery. Carefully pat incisions dry after showers.
- Any stitches will dissolve in 3-4 weeks.

- **Bowel function:** Constipation is common after surgery. You can take **P**oly**e**thylene **G**lycol (PEG) or Metamucil as needed with lots of water.
- **Pain:** For the first 1-2 days, you may have occasional cramping. This can feel like period cramps. To relieve the discomfort, take pain medication. (Follow the instructions below.) Use a heating pad as needed.

Pain medication

- Take pain medications if you need it.
- If you have a prescription, follow the instructions from your doctor and pharmacist.
- If you do not have a prescription, you can take the following medications:

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) 1000 mg every 6 hours
Next dose at:_____am/pm

AND / OR

Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin): 400 mg every 6 hours
Next dose at:_____am/pm

OR

Naproxen 440 to 500 mg every 12 hours
Next dose at:_____am/pm

NOTE: Naproxen is available without a prescription as 220 mg tablets (take 2 tablets). Prescription Naproxen comes in 500 mg tablets (take 1 tablet).

Do NOT take Naproxen with Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) or Diclofenac (Voltaren).

Gynecologist

Doctor's Sticker Here

Follow-up visit

- Contact your gynecologist's office to make a follow up appointment. Make sure you go to the appointment. It is important to see your gynecologist after this surgery.

Contact your Gynecologist or go to Emergency if you:

- Have vaginal bleeding that is increasing, heavy (soaks 1 full pad in 1 hour), or lasts longer than 3-4 weeks.
- Have incisions with bleeding that gets heavier, does not improve with firm steady pressure, or lasts longer than 1 week.
- Have incisions with signs of infection like redness, pus-like (yellow or green) drainage, or swelling.
- Have bad-smelling vaginal discharge.
- Have a fever or chills.
- Have severe pain, and pain medication does not help.
- Have nausea or vomiting for more than 24 hours, and you cannot keep fluids down.
- Cannot pee for 8 hours after you leave the hospital.

DO NOT go to the Urgent Care Centre at BC Women's as it is ONLY for pregnant patients.