



Gallbladder removal (laparoscopic cholecystectomy): aftercare advice

Information for patients from Day Surgery

What will I be able to do when I go home?

- It is normal to feel tired and a bit sore for several days following surgery. With keyhole surgery patients often feel pain in their shoulders and their appetite may be poor to begin with. It is better to eat light meals for the first few days, and avoid drinking alcohol while taking painkillers stronger than paracetamol.
- Your tummy may appear a bit swollen for a week or so. You may also find your bowels are constipated. This is the result of missing normal meals around the time of your surgery or can be the effect of the painkillers. This normally settles by itself, but if it doesn't a gentle laxative from the chemist will be helpful.
- You should walk about your house or garden during waking hours, to keep the blood circulating in your legs and reduce the chance of blood clots forming (known as deep vein thrombosis or DVT).
- Younger people will return to normal sooner than older people following surgery.
- Recovery will be quicker if you had a planned operation rather than if you had your gallbladder removed as an emergency.

How do I look after my wounds after I go home?

- If you had keyhole surgery, most wounds will have **dissolvable stitches** (they do not need to be taken out) covered with small dressings; these take two to three weeks to dissolve. Rarely, the cut end of the dissolvable stitches may be felt on the wound surface; this is of no concern, they should disappear in time.
- Sometimes the cuts are closed with paper called **steri-strips**; leave these on for three to five days.
- If you had an open operation, then you will have a 10 to 20cm wound, which may have **stitches or metal clips** that need to be removed seven to 10 days after your operation. This will normally be done by your GP practice nurse or district nurse. You will be told by the ward nurses before you leave

hospital whether this has already been arranged or whether you need to telephone your GP surgery to arrange this. These large wounds can weep longer and need to be covered for up to four to five days.

- You should keep your wounds dry for 48 hours after surgery, after this time you can have a **shower**. After five days you can have a **bath**, as long as your wounds are not weeping. Do not use scented bubble baths or shower gels as these may cause stinging.
- **Your wound may weep**, but this should stop by day five. Your wound needs to be checked by your GP practice nurse if it continues to weep after five days. Normal weeping is either clear or bloodstained fluid. If the fluid becomes thick and yellowish / greenish this may mean you have a wound infection. You should see your GP practice nurse within 24 hours of noticing this.
- It is normal for wounds to feel lumpy and tender for several weeks after surgery, with a slight redness along the line of the wound. **If the redness spreads more than 1cm from your wound edges or your wound becomes hot then this may be a sign of a wound infection developing, and you must see your GP practice nurse for advice.**

When can I return to work?

This depends on the type of work you do and your surgery (whether keyhole or open). You can return to a desk job a week or two after keyhole surgery or around four weeks after open surgery. A heavy manual job will need a longer time off work, around four weeks for keyhole surgery and eight weeks for open surgery.

When can I drive again?

You can start to drive once you can comfortably perform an emergency stop and turn around to safely reverse your car. We usually recommend not driving for three or four days after keyhole surgery and around ten days for open surgery.

Can I eat and drink as normal?

Yes. Eat a normal, well balanced diet; there may still be some foods which do not agree with you and it is only by trying different foods that you will discover those that are disagreeable.

What do I do if I feel unwell at home?

You should contact your GP immediately or one of the following helplines.

- Canterbury Day Surgery Centre, **Kent and Canterbury Hospital**, Canterbury
Telephone: 01227 783114 (7am to 8pm)
- Day Surgery, **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital**, Margate
Telephone: 01843 234499 (Monday to Friday 7am to 9pm)
Telephone: 07887 651162 (Monday to Friday 9pm to 7am) (Bank Holidays and weekends, 24 hours a day)
- Channel Day Surgery, **William Harvey Hospital**, Ashford
Telephone: 01233 616263 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

Reference number: Web 328

First published:
April 2016

Last reviewed:
April 2025

Next review date:
November 2027

Copyright © East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust.