



# Laparoscopy

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## About this leaflet

This information leaflet is for young people and their carers to read and understand the procedure of laparoscopy

Your healthcare team will:

- Advise you on why this procedure is being recommended
- Discuss pros and cons of the procedure
- Answer your questions
- Help you in decision-making

## Key points

- A laparoscopy is a keyhole operation that allows the doctor to have a look at the inside of your pelvis with a small telescope
- A laparoscopy can be used to help with diagnosing a cause for your symptoms
- Treatment can be carried out for problems diagnosed, at the same time in most cases
- You will be asleep for the operation
- Laparoscopy can carry a small risk of serious complications

## **What is laparoscopy?**

Your doctor has suggested an operation called a laparoscopy, this is also known as a keyhole surgery.

This operation enables the doctor to have a detailed and magnified view of the inside of your tummy with a small telescope. Laparoscopy can also be used to treat any problems that have been diagnosed.

## **What other treatments are available?**

Other treatment options should be discussed before planning surgery. However, if you or your parent / guardian are not sure about anything or this was not discussed, please do not hesitate to ask.

## **How is laparoscopy performed?**

A small cut (0.5 to 1 cm, the width of a fingernail) is made in your belly button. Your tummy is then filled with gas (carbon dioxide) and a small telescope (laparoscope) is inserted through the cut in the belly button. The laparoscope has a camera on one end which gives the doctor a good view of the inside of the tummy.

Up to 3 other cuts (of similar size) may also be made to put instruments in your tummy so that the doctor can carry out the operation. The number of cuts will depend on the type of surgery.

As part of the operation the doctor may need to pass a small tube called a catheter into your bladder. They may also need to gently examine you vaginally as part of the procedure. If either of these are needed, you will be asleep when they happen.

The time it takes for the operation will also depend on the type of operation you are having. Your doctor will discuss this before your surgery.

## **What tests are carried out before laparoscopy?**

It is very likely that you will have had an ultrasound scan or MRI of your tummy before your operation.

If this is an elective (planned) operation you may be asked to come to clinic for a pre-operative check-up.

## **What type of anaesthesia will be administered?**

This operation is only done under general anaesthetic which means you will be asleep the whole time and will not feel anything.

## **What are the risks and benefits of having a laparoscopy?**

### **Benefits:**

The main aim of doing this operation is to find the cause of the problem and treat it if possible. The surgeon can have a really good view of the inside of your tummy with laparoscopy. The cuts that have to be made are also much smaller than with usual surgery, which needs a much bigger cut on your tummy. The smaller cuts mean there is less pain, quicker recovery and you will be back to school or college and normal activities more quickly..

### **Risks:**

The more common risks are:

- Bruising
- Wound gaping
- Shoulder-tip pain (after the operation for a short period of time)
- Infection

These are not usually serious and are easily treated or resolve on their own.

However, there are some rare but more serious risks. These include:

- Damage to the other organs inside your tummy such as the bladder, the bowel and the blood vessels. If any damage does occur, it will usually be repaired at the time of laparoscopy. However, this might mean making a bigger cut on your tummy and a longer stay in hospital. This is very uncommon (2 in 1000).
- Hernia forming at the site of the keyhole cuts (<1 in 100)
- Blood clots in the legs or lung are extremely rare

If you are having a laparoscopy to look for causes of pain, there is a chance that nothing to explain your symptoms is found.

All of these risks will be explained to you and your parent or guardian. If you are under 16 years old, your parent or guardian will need to sign a consent form to say they have understood these risks. If you are over 16, you will be able to sign the consent form yourself.

## How long will it be necessary to stay in hospital?

Laparoscopy is most often carried out as a day case procedure. After you wake up from the operation, you have had something to eat and drink, have been to the toilet to pass urine and are comfortable, the doctors and nurses would be happy for you to go home

Your parent or guardian will need to be at home to look after you for at least the next 24 hours after the surgery. If you have treatment during the laparoscopy, then you may need to be in the hospital longer. Depending on your hospital, your parent or guardian may be able to stay with you and may be able to come to the operating theatre with you until you are asleep. They may also come to the recovery area to be there when you wake up.

## What care will be needed after laparoscopy?

**Stitches or Glue:** The small cuts made during laparoscopy will be closed with stitches or glue. If stitches are used, they are usually under the skin and are dissolvable (meaning they do not need to be removed) Please keep the area clean and dry for 3 days, after which you can remove any dressings and bathe the area as usual. Please do not rub the area as it can cause irritation.

**Pain/discomfort:** Feeling pain or discomfort in the first few days is quite common. It is important to take regular painkillers for the first few days after the operation. You may be given painkillers by the hospital or advised to buy paracetamol and /or ibuprofen. If, however, the pain gets worse or does not settle after taking pain killers, please seek advice.

If you have had just a laparoscopy but no treatment, then you will usually need 2-3 days off from school or college. If you have had some treatment at the same time, then you may need 1 or 2 weeks off. Your doctor will advise you on this and will provide a sick note.

## When should I seek hospital advice?

It is quite common to have shoulder tip pain or discomfort in the upper part of the tummy after the operation. This is due to the gas that was used to distend your tummy. Most laparoscopic operations do not cause any problem afterwards, but there are certain signs you will need to look out for at home:

- If you have raised temperature, redness or discharge from the wounds, then infection is a possibility. If this happens seek advice from the ward or your GP.

- If you have on-going bleeding from the cuts on your tummy after you have gone home, you should seek advice immediately.
- Injury to bowel is another rare complication. Normally it is identified during the operation and repaired. However, sometimes it can go unnoticed. If you have persistent or increasing abdominal pain or vomiting, contact the hospital immediately.

## **Will I need to visit the hospital again after the operation?**

Your doctor will tell you after the operation if there is a need for a hospital appointment.

## **Useful Telephone Numbers**

You may be given the telephone number for your hospital ward or for your clinical nurse specialist. In addition, you can contact your own GP.

NHS 111 - This number is if you need medical advice but it is not a medical emergency

NHS website ([www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk))

## **Sources and acknowledgements**

This information has been produced by the BritSPAG Executive Committee.

The information is evidence-based (at the time of production) and a full reference list is held by the BritSPAG Executive Committee.