

Laparoscopy

What is a laparoscopy?

This is a small operation that uses a narrow, telescope-like instrument called a laparoscope. It is put into the abdomen through a small incision. The surgeon can look at the contents of the abdomen and also remove tissue samples (biopsies) to confirm a diagnosis.

Why do I need a laparoscopy?

A laparoscopy will help your doctors find out the extent of the cancer. This information will help them decide on the most appropriate treatment for you. If the cancer has spread to your abdomen, then major surgery such as the removal of your stomach or gullet may not be recommended. Alternative treatments will then be discussed with you.

What does it involve?

You will need to have a general anaesthetic for this operation. You will be asked not to eat or drink anything for up to six hours before the procedure. The surgeon will make two or three small cuts into your abdomen. One cut is made close to your navel or umbilicus and the laparoscope is passed through this. To give the surgeon a clearer view, gas is pumped through the laparoscope into your abdomen. Pictures of the inside of your abdomen are shown on a television monitor in the operating room.

The surgeon can pass a narrow instrument through the other cut(s) to move around organs to get a better view of different areas. A biopsy or sample of any abnormal looking area can be taken at the same time. These biopsies are sent off for examination under a microscope to find out if they are cancer. It may take a week before you get the results on your next hospital visit.

Will I need to be admitted to hospital?

This procedure is usually carried out as a day case, however occasionally an overnight stay is necessary. Your surgeon will discuss this with you and decide what is the best choice for you.

As a **day case**, you will be admitted to the Day Surgery Unit where the nursing staff will prepare you for the procedure. A nurse from the Day Surgery Unit may telephone you beforehand at home. This will be to check that you have all the information you need and understand what is going to happen and that you have had any necessary tests. You will have any tests such as blood tests, an ECG and chest x-ray before the procedure as an outpatient, if they are required.

As you will be having a general anaesthetic, you will need to make arrangements to be collected by a relative or friend. **You will also need to organise for someone to spend the first 24 hours with you after the procedure.**



As an **inpatient** you will be admitted the day before the procedure. The doctor and nurses will take a few details, organise blood tests, ECG and chest x-ray as appropriate. The following day, you will be taken to the operating room for the laparoscopy. You will wake up from the anaesthetic in the recovery bay before returning to your ward. Usually, you will be able to leave hospital the following day.

Are there any side effects to having a laparoscopy?

As with all procedures, there may be unwanted effects from the procedure itself or the anaesthetic. Your abdomen may feel sore and bloated. The gas used to inflate your abdomen, may also cause you discomfort and sharp pains by your shoulders, called referred pain. This usually disappears after 48 hours. You may need to take regular painkillers, such as paracetamol for a couple of days. Other side effects include sickness, infection or bleeding.

If you have any of the following problems within a few hours or days of the procedure, please tell your surgical team or your nurse specialist:

- Pain – if the painkillers recommended do not take the pain away or if the pain lasts for more than two days
- Sickness – if you feel sick and are unable to eat or drink, or if you vomit after eating
- Infection – if the small cuts in your abdomen become infected. The signs to look out for are redness and discharge, or have a fever (temperature of 38°C).
- Bleeding – if the bleeding does not stop.

Very occasionally, a complication of laparoscopy can include accidental damage to internal organs. This would need further surgery to repair the damage.

How will I feel after the procedure?

You will have two or three stitches where each cut was made, covered with a simple dry dressing. These stitches are dissolvable. You will be able to eat and drink normally after the procedure.

When you arrive home, we suggest you either rest in bed or relax on a comfortable chair for the rest of the day. If you are working, try to take one or two days off work.

Contact details

Often you may have questions you wish to ask. Writing these down beforehand may help you to remember them. You are also welcome to bring someone with you to your appointments.

Your key worker will give you their contact card with their details.

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

