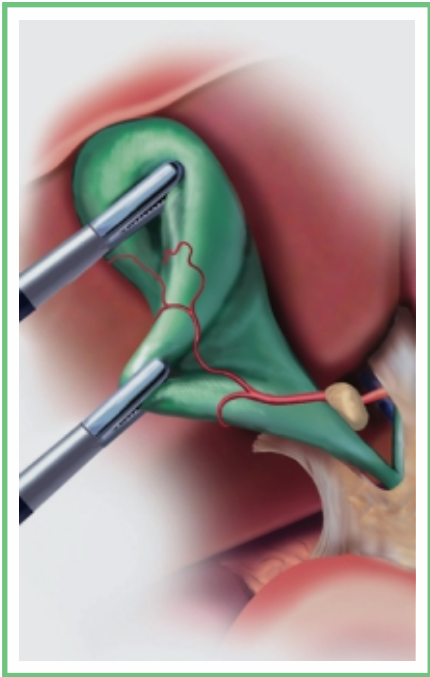


# Surgery for Gallbladder Stones

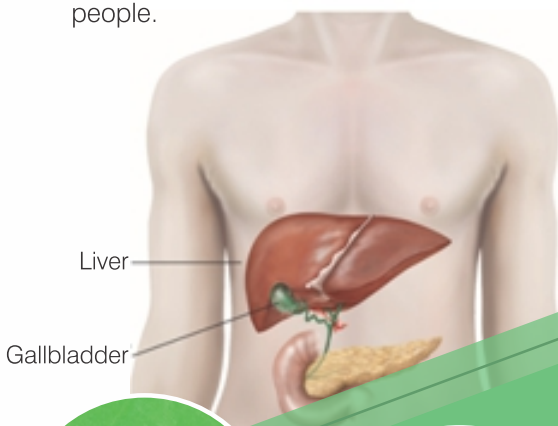


(Laparoscopic Gallbladder Removal)

# Gallbladder Stones

## What is the gallbladder?

- The gallbladder is a pear-shaped organ that rests beneath the right side of the liver.
- Its main purpose is to collect and concentrate a digestive liquid (bile) produced by the liver. Bile is released from the gallbladder after eating, aiding digestion. Bile travels through narrow tubular channels (bile ducts) into the small intestine.
- Removal of the gallbladder is not associated with any impairment of digestion in most people.



## What causes gallbladder problems?

- Gallbladder problems are usually caused by the presence of gallstones which are usually small and hard, consisting primarily of cholesterol and bile salts that form in the gallbladder or in the bile duct.
- It is uncertain why some people form gallstones but risk factors include being female, prior pregnancy, age over 40 years and being overweight. Gallstones are also more common as you get older and some people may have a family history of gallstones.
- There is no known means to prevent gallstones.
- These stones may block the flow of bile out of the gallbladder, causing it to swell and resulting in sharp abdominal pain, vomiting, indigestion and occasionally fever.
- If the gallstone blocks the common bile duct, jaundice (yellowing of the skin) can occur.



## How are these problems found and treated?

- Ultrasound is most commonly used to find gallstones.
- In a few more complex cases, other test such as a CT scan or a gallbladder nuclear medicine scan may be used to evaluate gallbladder disease.
- Gallstones do not go away on their own. Some can be temporarily managed by making dietary adjustments, such as reducing fat intake. This treatment has a low, short-term success rate. Symptoms will eventually continue unless the gallbladder is removed. Treatments to break up or dissolve gallstones are largely unsuccessful.
- Surgical removal of the gallbladder is the time honored and safest treatment of gallbladder disease.

### **About gallbladder surgery**

Gallbladder removal is one of the most commonly performed surgical procedures. Gallbladder removal surgery is usually performed with minimally invasive techniques and the medical name for this procedure is “Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy”.

## What are the advantages of performing Laparoscopic gallbladder removal?

- Rather than a five to seven inch incision, the operation requires only four small openings in the abdomen.
- Patients usually have minimal post-operative pain.
- Patients usually experience faster recovery than open gallbladder surgery patients.
- Most patients go home the next day of the surgery and enjoy a quicker return to normal activities.

## How is laparoscopic gallbladder removal performed?

- Under general anesthesia, so the patient is asleep throughout the procedure.
- Using a cannula (a narrow tube-like instrument), the surgeon enters the abdomen in the area of the belly-button.
- A laparoscope (a tiny telescope) connected to a special camera is inserted through the cannula, giving the surgeon a magnified view of the patient's internal organs on a television screen.
- Other cannulas are inserted which allow your surgeon to delicately separate the gallbladder from its attachments and then remove it through one of the openings.
- If the surgeon finds one or more stones in the common bile duct, he/she may remove them with a special scope, may choose to have them removed later through an endoscope placed through the mouth into the stomach using a procedure called ERCP or may convert to an open operation in order to remove all the stones during the operation.
- After the surgeon removes the gallbladder, the small incisions are closed with absorbable or non-absorbable stitches.

## What happens if the gallbladder removal cannot be performed or completed by the laparoscopic method?

- In a small number of patients, the laparoscopic method cannot be performed for gallbladder removal. Factors that may increase the possibility of choosing or converting to the “open” procedure may include a very inflamed and scarred gallbladder, obesity, a history of prior abdominal surgery causing dense scar tissue, inability to visualize organs or bleeding problems during the operation.
- The decision to perform the open procedure is a judgment decision made by your surgeon either before or during the actual operation. When the surgeon feels that it is safest to convert the laparoscopic procedure to an open one, this is not a complication, but rather good surgical judgment. The decision to convert to an open procedure is strictly based on patient safety.



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