



What is the gallbladder and what does it do?

The gallbladder is a small sac that sits beneath the liver and connects to the common bile duct. The gallbladder stores a small amount of bile, which is made in the liver. Bile is a digestive fluid that helps digest the fats in your food. When you eat a meal your gallbladder squeezes and releases a small amount of bile into your digestive tract.

Why might I need my gallbladder removed?

You may have stones in your gallbladder. Stones form when you have too much cholesterol, bilirubin or bile salts in your bile. You are more likely to get gallstones if you are a woman, overweight, have had children and are over 40; but stones can form in anyone. Gallstones also can be hereditary.

Are gallstones a problem?

They can be. The most common symptom of gallstones is pain after eating. Pain is usually located in your upper abdomen. Gallstones can also cause gallbladder inflammation or infection. If a gallstone escapes from your gallbladder and into the common bile duct it can cause a bile blockage or liver infection; or it can cause pancreatitis.

What is the treatment of gallbladder disease?

The mainstay of treatment is surgery to remove your gallbladder called a cholecystectomy.

How is surgery performed?

Surgery is performed either laparoscopic or robotic. Both are minimally invasive techniques that use a few small incisions to remove your gallbladder.

What are some complications that can happen?

Cholecystectomy is a very safe, very common procedure, but there are complications. Injury to the common bile duct is a known complication that happens in less than 1% of cases. Injury to the liver and surrounding organs such as stomach, colon, or small bowel can also happen. Other complications include bile leak or retained gallstone. If the surgery is difficult there is also a chance

your surgeon may need to convert from a minimally invasive surgery to an open surgery, which requires a larger incision beneath your rib cage.

What does recovery look like?

In the vast majority of cases your surgery can be performed in the outpatient setting. You will have a few days of postoperative pain and should be able to return to normal activity within a week. Up to a third of patients develop loose stools after surgery, which is usually not permanent. You do not need to change your diet in any way. There are no supplements or other medications you need to take long term.

How do I know if something is wrong?

Some postoperative pain and bruising is normal. If you have intractable pain, incision redness, fever, prolonged nausea or emesis not relieved by medication please call your surgeon.