

Abdominal Hysterectomy

Patient Information Document

Your surgery

An abdominal hysterectomy is a surgical procedure to remove the uterus and the cervix through an incision in the abdomen (stomach). The surgery usually lasts 75 to 90 minutes.

You can ask us questions at any time. We are here to help you recover as quickly as possible.

The day before your surgery

- You must fast as of midnight.
- You can drink small sips of water up to 2 hours before your surgery.
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol.

The morning of your surgery

- If you are diabetic, do not take any oral hypoglycaemic drugs, or insulin, unless your surgeon has instructed you to do so.
- Go to Room 2A105, at the scheduled time.
- We will complete your file to ensure that your state of health has not changed since your appointment at the Preadmission Clinic.
- Your surgeon may request additional tests or treatments, or that you be seen by other specialists.
- Your anaesthetist will discuss pain management with you. A pump may be installed so that pain medication can be administered intravenously. You will be able to control the pump yourself. You may also be given pain medication in the form of an epidural or spinal anaesthesia.

After your surgery, in the recovery room

- Your vital signs (blood pressure, temperature, breathing and pulse) and your pain level will be monitored regularly.
- You will have a urinary catheter so that you do not have to go to the bathroom.
- You will also have an intravenous catheter to receive medication.
- When you are well enough, you will be given ice chips, to keep you hydrated.
- You will have a dressing and staples in your abdomen, to keep your incision closed.
- You will wear a sanitary napkin as a precaution, in case of vaginal bleeding.
- You will be taken to your room after one or two hours in the recovery room.

After your surgery, in your room

- You will be in hospital for a few days.
 - The dressing and staples are usually removed by your nurse before you leave the hospital. Small bandages (Steri-Strip™) will then be applied to keep your incision closed. These bandages can be removed 7 to 10 days after your surgery.
 - You will probably feel pain in your lower abdomen for a few days. You will be given medication to relieve the pain.
 - Your intravenous catheter will be removed if you are able to tolerate liquids, unless you have a pump to receive pain medication.
 - We will assist you in sitting up and getting out of bed.
 - We will also help you to wash (personal hygiene).
 - When you are in bed, do circulation exercises, like moving your feet and legs, and change your position regularly.
 - Your urinary catheter will be removed the day after your surgery and your bladder will fill up normally. Try to urinate every 3 to 4 hours.
 - Take your time when urinating. When you feel that you have finished, lean forward while slightly lifting yourself off the toilet seat. Then, sit down again and give one last push to try to completely empty your bladder. Measure the quantity of urine in the urine collection “hat” placed on the toilet. Your nurse may also do an ultrasound of your bladder to make sure that it is emptying properly.
 - If you cannot empty your bladder on your own, your nurse will help you with the use of a small tube.
 - Although very rare, you may have to go home with a urinary catheter to empty your bladder for 3 or 4 days.
 - Before leaving the hospital, make sure you are familiar with perineal care and that you have your prescriptions.
 - If you are discharged from the hospital within 72 hours of your admission, you will be eligible for the Aetonix community paramedic program.
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Wearing a urinary catheter at home

- You may not be able to urinate right after your surgery, due to swelling around the ureter. This is normal, and will gradually resolve.
- Before you leave the hospital, your nurse will make sure that you know how to care for your catheter and the small drainage bag.
- Your catheter will be removed 3 or 4 days later, at your surgeon's office. If you are still unable to urinate on your own, you may have to wear a catheter for another week.

At home, after your surgery

- You must be accompanied home and someone should stay with you for 24 to 72 hours after your surgery.
- If the staples keeping your incision closed are still in place, they will be removed by your surgeon at your next follow-up appointment.
- If your Steri-Strips™ are still in place 10 days after your surgery, gently remove them.
- Monitor your incision site. If you notice redness, discharge or if the wound is very sensitive to touch, contact your surgeon.
- You can take a shower. Consult your surgeon to find out when you can take a bath.
- It is normal to have vaginal bleeding or discharge for up to two weeks after your surgery.
- Wear a sanitary napkin or use a tampon, if needed, and change it regularly to avoid infection.

- Take your pain medication, as prescribed.
- To avoid constipation, drink 6 to 8 glasses of fluids a day, and eat fruit, vegetables and whole grain foods. You can take milk of magnesium if you have not had a bowel movement two days after your return home.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks. They may irritate your bladder.
- You can resume your regular activities as soon as you return home. But do not lift heavy objects (more than 9 kg, or 20 lb) or strain (intense exercises, sit-ups) for 6 weeks following your surgery. Consult your surgeon before resuming this type of activity.
- Do not drive for two weeks after your surgery.
- You can return to work 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery, depending on the physical requirements of your job.
- You can resume sexual relations 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery, or based on your surgeon's instructions.
- Call your surgeon's office to make a follow-up appointment in 6 weeks.

Contact your surgeon if:

- You have fever above 38°C (100.4°F).
- You have abundant and/or foul smelling vaginal discharge.
- You notice redness or fluid seeping from the incision.
- You have a urinary infection or urine retention.
- You have pain or swelling in your legs.
- You have persistent vomiting.
- Your stomach is bloated.

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