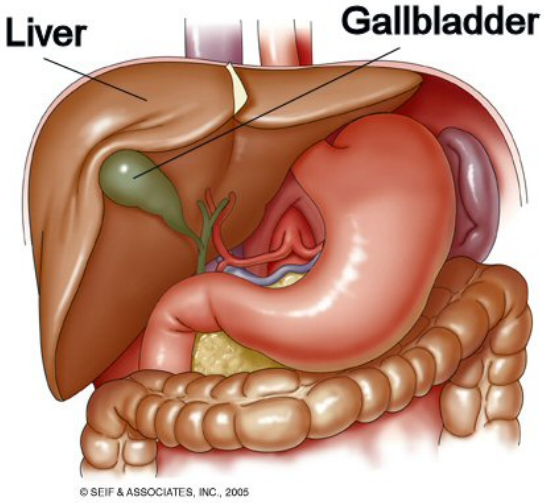
Cholecystectomy, Open
(Removal of Gallbladder)

Gallbladder disease (*cholecystitis*) is an inflammation of your gallbladder. This condition is usually caused by a build-up of stones (gallstones, or cholelithiasis) in your gallbladder. The gallbladder is a *non-essential organ* (not required for life). It is located slightly to the right of center in the *abdomen* (belly), behind the liver. It is a concentrating and storage sac for the bile produced in the liver.
Bile aids in the digestion and absorption of fats. Gallstones can block the flow of bile resulting in inflammation and pain.



SYMPTOMS
Gallbladder disease may result in feeling sick to your stomach (*nausea*), abdominal pain and a yellowing of the skin (*jaundice*).

TREATMENT
In severe cases, emergency surgery may be required. Your caregiver may have advised you to have your gallbladder removed. When emergency surgery is not required, you will have time to prepare for the procedure.

BEFORE SURGERY WHEN NOT DONE AS AN EMERGENCY PROCEDURE
- Do not take aspirin or blood thinners for a week prior to surgery.
- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before surgery.
- Let your caregiver know if you develop a cold or other infectious problem prior to surgery.
- You should be present one hour before the procedure or as directed. Check in at the admissions desk for filling out necessary forms if not pre-registered. There may be consent forms to sign prior to the procedure. Should friends or family be with you, there is a waiting area available for them while you are having your procedure.

LET YOUR CAREGIVERS KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:
- Allergies.
- Medications taken including herbs, eye drops, over the counter medications and creams.
- Use of steroids (by mouth or creams).
- Previous problems with anesthetics or novocaine.
- Possibility of pregnancy, if this applies.
- History of blood clots (thrombophlebitis).
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- Previous surgery.
- Other health problems.

PROCEDURE
You will be given an anesthetic which will keep you pain free during surgery. When you are asleep, your surgeon will make a cut (*incision*) to enter your belly (*abdomen*). The surgeon will examine the inside of your abdomen and make sure there are no other problems. Following the removal of your gallbladder, your abdomen will be closed with stitches (*sutures*) on the inside and also stitches in the skin.

RISKS
All surgery is associated with risks. Some of these risks are:
- Excessive bleeding.
- Injury to surrounding organs.
- Infection.
- Injury to the common duct.

COMPLICATIONS
Some problems that occur following this procedure include:

- Infection: A germ starts growing in the wound. This can usually be treated with antibiotics.
- Damage to other organs may occur.
- Bleeding following surgery can be a complication of almost all surgeries. Your surgeon takes every precaution to keep this from happening.

AFTER SURGERY

- After surgery, you will be taken to the recovery area where a nurse will watch and check your progress.
- The hospital stay after open cholecystectomy is usually 3 to 5 days.
- Do not resume physical activities until directed by your caregiver and surgeon.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- You may resume normal diet and activities as directed.
- Change dressings as directed.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- There is redness, swelling, or increasing pain in the wound.
- There is pus coming from the wound.
- There is drainage from a wound lasting longer than one day.
- An unexplained oral temperature above 102º F (38.9º C) develops.
- You notice a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.
- The incision breaks open.
- You notice increasing pain in the shoulders (shoulder strap areas).
- You develop dizzy episodes or fainting while standing.
- You develop persistent nausea or vomiting.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a rash.
- You have difficulty breathing
- You develop any reaction or side effects to medications given.

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