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Laparoscopy

Laparoscopy is a procedure that allows your surgeon to view (and in some cases, perform surgery on) the organs in your abdomen, such as the intestines, stomach, and gallbladder, and in women, pelvic organs, such as the ovaries. A **laparoscope** is a long, thin tube that is inserted into the abdomen and allows viewing of abdominal organs with a video camera. Laparoscopic surgery usually results in shorter stays in the hospital than traditional surgery. Because the incisions involved are very small, there is less pain associated with the procedure and recovery is usually faster. Laparoscopic surgery is not appropriate for every operation. Some patients will continue to require traditional open surgery. The January 16, 2002, issue of JAMA contains an article about laparoscopic-assisted surgery for patients with colon cancer.

HOW LAPAROSCOPY IS PERFORMED

Laparoscopy may be performed under a **local** (the patient is not asleep) or **general** (the patient is asleep) **anesthetic**, usually at a hospital.

The Procedure

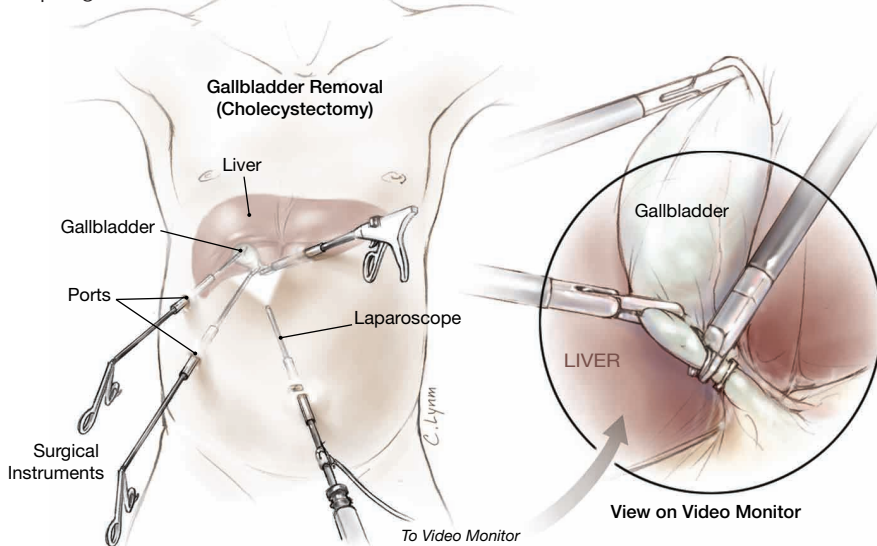
A small cut (usually about an inch long) is made a little above or below the navel. Carbon dioxide gas is injected through the incision to inflate the abdomen so your doctor has a larger space in which to work.

The laparoscope is inserted and the surgeon views the organs on a video monitor. In some cases, the physician may make additional small incisions (**ports**) so he or she can use other instruments to move the organs around for better viewing and to perform any procedures.

When the examination or surgery is over, the laparoscope and any other instruments are removed and the incisions are closed with stitches.

Recuperation

Afterward, the incision site(s) might throb or be painful. Your doctor may prescribe pain medication. You may have to urinate more frequently since the gas can put pressure on your bladder. There may be soreness in your shoulders since the gas can irritate the diaphragm, which shares nerves with the shoulders.



TYPES OF LAPAROSCOPY

- **Diagnostic** laparoscopy is used to determine the cause of an abdominal problem, or sometimes to provide additional information after other tests have been performed.
- **Pelvic or gynecologic** laparoscopy is used both for diagnostic purposes when there is pain or infection, and for surgery such as tubal ligation (having the fallopian tubes "tied"), or removal of ovarian cysts or other abnormal pelvic growths.
- **Intra-abdominal** laparoscopic surgery may be used for appendectomies, gallbladder surgery, hernia repair, and other procedures.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- American College of Surgeons
312/202-5000
www.facs.org
- Society of Laparoendoscopic Surgeons
800/446-2659
www.sls.org
- Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons
310/314-2404
www.sages.org

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Sources: American Society of General Surgeons, Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons, National Institutes of Health, Society of Laparoendoscopic Surgeons

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