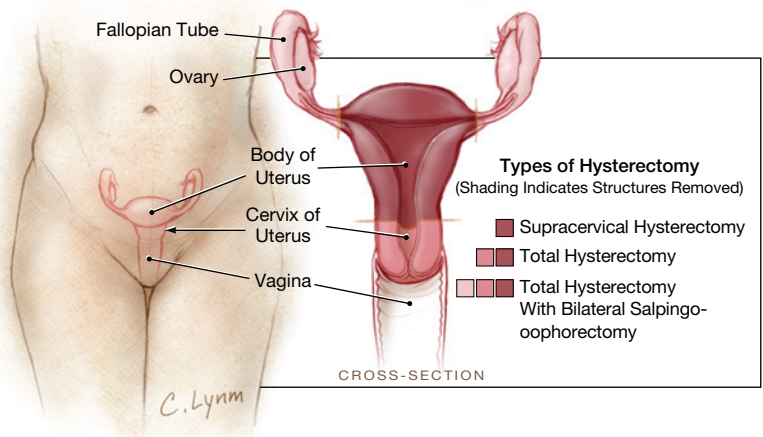


Hysterectomy

A woman's reproductive organs include the **uterus** (womb), vagina, fallopian tubes, and ovaries. Surgery to remove the uterus is called **hysterectomy**. Hysterectomy is a common operation for women in the United States, second only to **cesarean section** (abdominal delivery of a pregnancy). Because hysterectomy is major surgery with risks, alternatives to this treatment may need to be considered along with the benefits of having a hysterectomy. Women who have a hysterectomy stop having menstrual periods and cannot become pregnant or give birth. If the tubes and ovaries are removed along with the uterus (called a hysterectomy with **bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy**) menopause will occur, regardless of the patient's age, because of the absence of estrogen produced by the ovaries. Removing the uterus may speed the onset of menopause by several years. The March 24/31, 2004, issue of *JAMA* includes an article about hysterectomy for abnormal uterine bleeding.



REASONS FOR HAVING A HYSTERECTOMY

Reasons for having a hysterectomy include abnormal uterine bleeding, such as **menorrhagia** (extremely heavy menstrual periods); uterine **fibroids** (benign tumors causing heavy or irregular bleeding or pressure); chronic pelvic pain due to uterine **adenomyosis** (uterine glands that penetrate into the muscle of the uterus) or **endometriosis** (uterine glands that implant into other pelvic tissues); uterine **prolapse** (uterus protruding into the vagina); and cancer of the female reproductive organs.

TYPES OF HYSTERECTOMY

- **Supracervical (or subtotal) hysterectomy**—most of the uterus is removed, but the **cervix** (neck of the uterus) is not removed.
- **Total hysterectomy**—the entire uterus is removed, with or without the tubes and ovaries.
- **Radical hysterectomy**—removal of the uterus and surrounding tissues, including the upper third of the vagina; this is mainly done, along with removal of pelvic lymph nodes, for treatment of early cervical cancer.

SURGICAL PROCEDURES FOR HYSTERECTOMY

- **Vaginal**—the uterus is removed through the vagina.
- **Abdominal**—the uterus is removed through an incision in the woman's abdomen.
- **Laparoscopic**—the uterus is removed in sections through small incisions using a **laparoscope** (a tube with a video camera to view organs).

Sources: National Women's Health Information Center; American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; American Academy of Family Physicians

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- National Women's Health Information Center
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- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
www.acog.org

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To find this and previous JAMA Patient Pages, go to the Patient Page link on JAMA's Web site at www.jama.com. A Patient Page on laparoscopic surgery was published in the January 16, 2002, issue; one on ovarian cancer was published in the July 17, 2002, issue; one on endometrial cancer was published in the October 2, 2002, issue; and one on perimenopause was published in the February 19, 2003, issue.

