What to expect after laparoscopic surgery

Following your surgery you may experience:

- some degree of nausea
- discomfort and tiredness is common for up to five days
- pain where the cuts were made
- abdominal bloating for up to 2–3 weeks
- aching of the muscles
- pain in the shoulder tip and rib cage. This is due to small amounts of gas remaining under the diaphragm
- there may also be period type pains and a few days of vaginal bleeding or discharge.
- constipation

Pain relief

- Pain relief tablets such as regular paracetamol and non steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (i.e. ibuprofen) may be required for at least 5–7 days following a laparoscopy but possibly up to 4 weeks or more in some instances.
- Try and avoid codeine containing painkillers where possible as they cause constipation.

Shoulder tip pain

- Shoulder discomfort is common after a laparoscopy due to some residual carbon dioxide gas in the upper abdomen irritating the nerves near your diaphragm muscle.
- This is normal (and not dangerous) and usually settles in less than 1 week as your body reabsorbs the CO2.
- It may be improved by local heat (heatbags placed over affected area), pain relief and can be positional so try different positions (i.e. lying on your side, reclining on 2–3 pillows etc).

Wound care

- You will have 2–5 dressings covering the small wounds.
- These may be left in place until they become discoloured or start to peel off.
- Dry them off after your shower by wiping with a towel or using a hair dryer (on cool setting).
- Avoid having baths or getting into a spa until after your stitches have been removed and any vaginal bleeding has stopped.
Resumption of daily activities.

First week

- No housework such as washing, ironing, cleaning and gardening
- Rest as much as possible with frequent short walks around the house

Within 1–2 weeks

- Activities such as driving, simple chores and non-vigorous exercise (e.g., walking, bike riding, Tai Chi) may be resumed if you feel comfortable
- Driving can be resumed at your discretion but usually not before 3–7 days.
- Return to paid employment

Within 3–4 weeks

- Vigorous exercise (e.g., competitive sport) may be resumed after 3–4 weeks depending on the extent of your surgery and how you feel.
- If any activity causes significant pain or discomfort avoid that activity until you are feeling better.
- Sexual intercourse – it is best to wait between 10–14 days for a minor laparoscopy and 3–4 weeks from an operative laparoscopy (i.e., removal of endometriosis, removal of ovary or cyst etc) but not until all bleeding or vaginal discharge has settled. If in doubt wait for advice at your post-operative visit

Vaginal bleeding or discharge

- Most women will have some vaginal bleeding or discharge that is blood stained or perhaps a brownish colour that will usually settle after 7 days or so following their laparoscopy.
- Do not use tampons during this time.

General advice

- Everyone recovers at a slightly different rate.
- Please contact the rooms on Ph 8239 2261 for advice if you develop:
  - severe abdominal pains that do not settle after taking pain relief and rest
  - ongoing vomiting,
  - a high fever (>38 degrees).
  - very offensive vaginal discharge
  - heavy vaginal bleeding