

The road to recovery

After laparoscopic surgery



Laparoscopy has revolutionised the field of abdominal surgery over the past thirty years, allowing surgeons to perform operations without the need for a large abdominal incision. Recovery times are typically much shorter than for open surgery, and may be as short as 1-2 weeks, depending on the procedure that has been performed. This infographic shows some of the key milestones and hazards along the road to recovery



Smaller procedures
 Appendicectomy
 Cholecystectomy
 Hernia repair

Larger procedures
 Larger cancer procedures



Pain

Should subside after 24 hours. Worsening post-operative pain suggests a potential abdominal complication, and the patient requires urgent assessment



Swellings

May indicate:

- Abscess
- Seroma
- Haematoma



Driving

Before driving, patients need to be able to:

- Apply an emergency brake
- Look in their blind spot
- React quickly enough

Smaller procedures:

May be able to drive after 1-2 weeks

Larger procedures:

May have to wait longer



Analgesics

Smaller procedures:

- Regular for 1st week
- As required after

Larger procedures:

Regular analgesia may be needed for longer



Infection

Antibiotics may be required for patients with wounds that are:

- Swollen
- Tender
- Red
- Oozing
- Hot

Refer patient urgently to hospital if there is concern about deeper infection



Return to work

Usually an individual decision, based on patient's occupation and operation performed

Smaller procedures:

May only need 2 weeks off work

Larger procedures:

- A longer break may be needed
- Consider gradual return to work



Heavy lifting

Patients advised initially not to lift anything heavier than a kettle or a shopping bag until:

- Smaller procedures: 1-2 weeks
- Larger procedures: 4 weeks



Travel

Patients usually advised not to fly for 24 hours after laparoscopy, and to use thromboembolic stockings if flying within one month of surgery



Thromboprophylaxis

For 28 days after cancer or bariatric procedures

