



Getting ready for and recovering from Gynecological Surgery



Island Health Surgery Resources



About these materials

This booklet was developed with input from doctors and health care providers. It provides specific information to help you prepare for your surgery and recovery.

Please read this booklet as soon as you get it!

If your surgeon or nurse gives you information that is different than what is in this booklet, please follow their directions.

This booklet is meant to be read with the *Getting Ready for and Recovering from your Surgery* booklet; it provides general information to help you prepare for your surgery and recovery. It is important that you read both booklets. You can find copies by:

- Asking your surgeon's office, or
- Going to Island Health's Surgery website:

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/surgery/getting-ready-surgery>



Help your care team help you!

Share this booklet with your care team so they know about your plans to recover and get home as soon as possible.

Please note that the information in this booklet is current as of the date printed on it.

Surgical Services, Island Health



Preparing for Surgery



About Your Gynecological Surgery



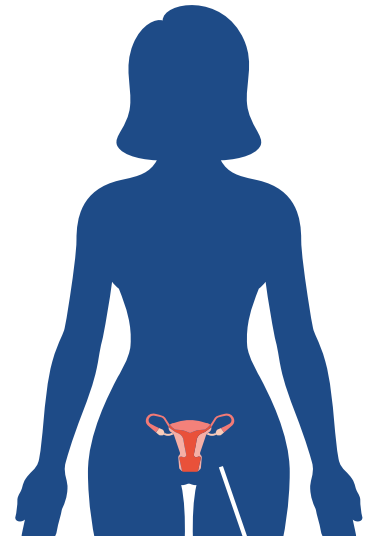
Your likely length of hospital stay is 2 days. You may go home earlier or later, depending on your recovery.

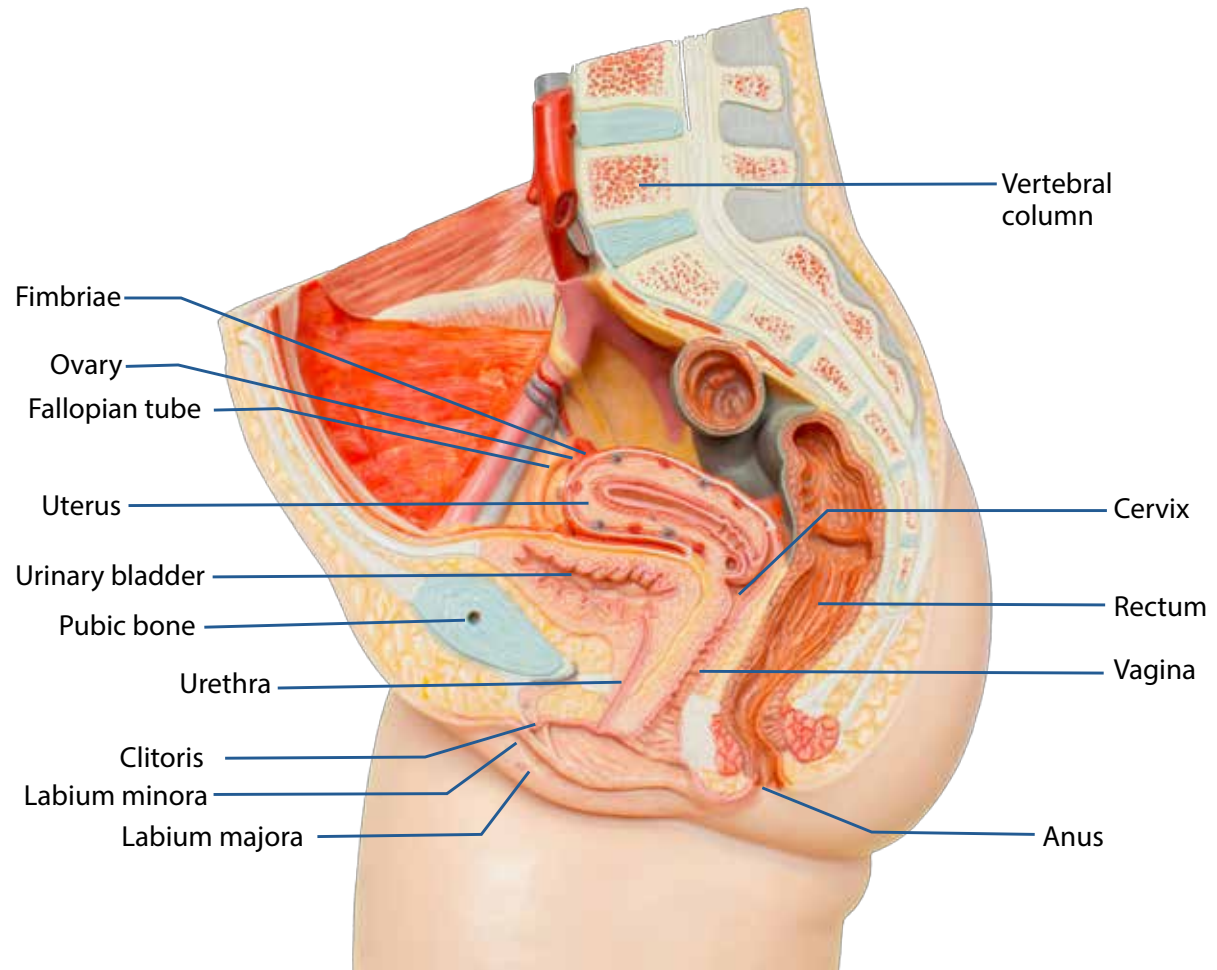
Surgery Information

The Female Reproductive System

The internal reproductive organs in the female include:

- **Vagina:** The vagina is a canal that joins the cervix (the lower part of uterus) to the outside of the body.
- **Uterus:** The uterus is a hollow, pear-shaped organ that is the home to a developing fetus. The uterus is divided into two parts: the cervix and the main body of the uterus, called the corpus.
- **Cervix:** The lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina
- **Ovaries:** The ovaries are small, oval-shaped glands that are located on either side of the uterus. The ovaries produce eggs and hormones.
- **Fallopian tubes:** These are narrow tubes that are attached to the upper part of the uterus and serve as tunnels for the ova (egg cells) to travel from the ovaries to the uterus.





Common types of Gynecological Surgery

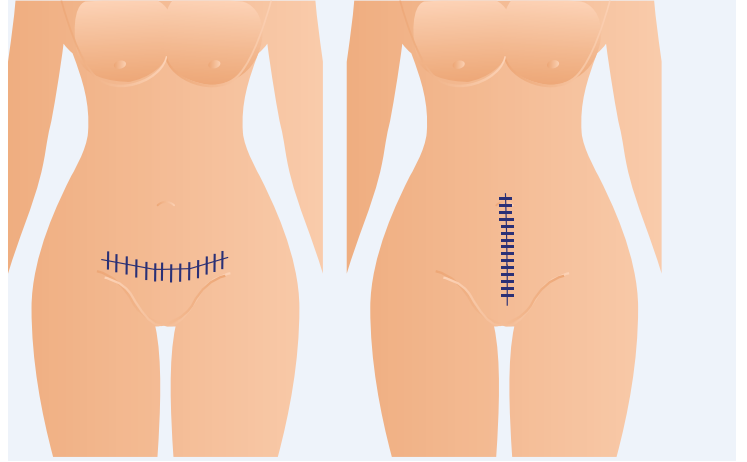
- Hysterectomy - removal of the uterus.
- Salpingectomy - removal of the fallopian tubes.
- Oophorectomy - removal of the ovaries.
- Urethropexy - procedure to treat urinary incontinence (loss of bladder control).
- Anterior and posterior repair (colporrhaphy) - procedure to correct pelvic organs that have dropped out of their normal positions.
- Enterocele repair - procedure to correct the protrusion of the small intestine into the vaginal cavity.

How is the surgery done?

There are 3 ways of doing gynecological surgeries: open, laparoscopic or vaginal.

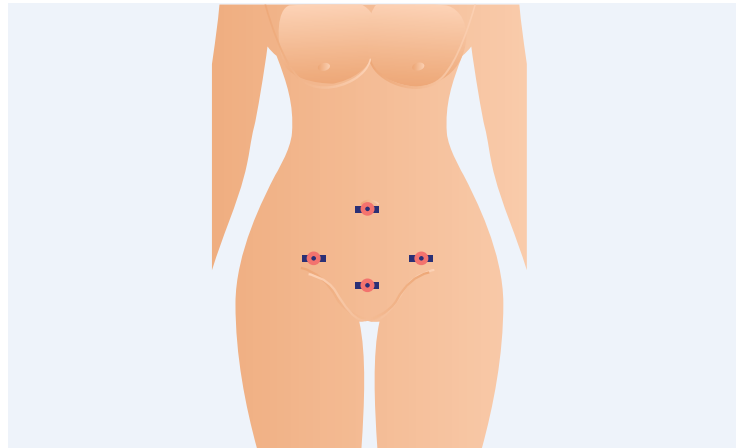
Open Surgery

The surgeon will make an incision in your abdomen (belly).



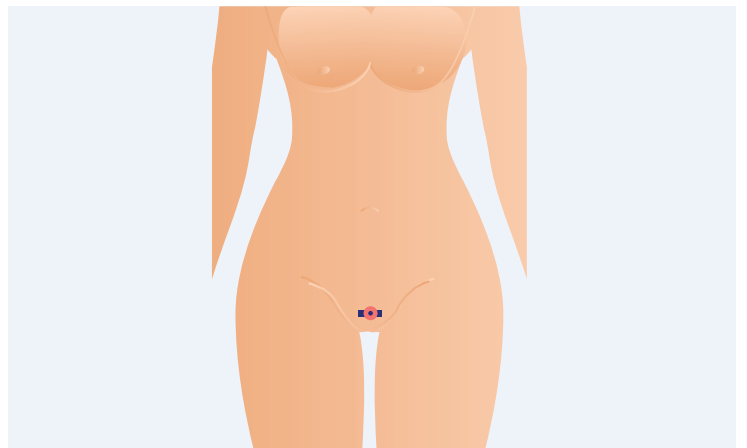
Laparoscopic Surgery

The surgeon will make 4-6 very small incisions in your abdomen. He/she will then insert surgical instruments and a camera through the incisions in order to perform your surgery.



Vaginal Approach

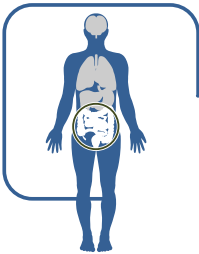
The surgeon will use an approach where surgery is performed through the vaginal opening.



What to expect after your surgery

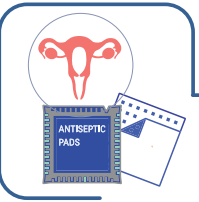


By knowing what to expect after surgery, you can plan now to help your recovery.



Going to the bathroom

Your nurse will watch your bladder and bowel functions after surgery. You may have a catheter placed in your bladder to drain urine before or during surgery. It will be removed within 24 hours after surgery unless your surgeon decides otherwise.



Vaginal Packing

After surgery you may have vaginal packing (gauze similar to a large tampon) to reduce the amount of bleeding. This will be removed before you go home.



Wounds

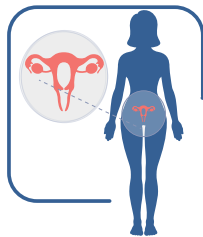
If you have had a laparoscopic procedure you will have 3-6 small incisions on your abdomen that will be covered with steri strips. If you have had an open procedure, you will have a gauze dressing over your incision for the first 48 hours. After 48 hours, dressings will be removed and your incisions will be left open to air if there is no drainage. Your nurse will teach you how to care for your incisions at home.



Going home after Surgery



Discharge for overnight stays is usually 9:00 AM. The staff will tell your family or friend when to pick you up. Remember, you need to plan for a ride home.



Vaginal Discharge

It is normal to have some vaginal discharge or spotting for 4 to 6 weeks after surgery. It may be red, pinkish, or reddish-brown and may have a slight odor. Use pads for drainage and remember to change them at least every 4 hours. **DO NOT** use tampons or put anything in your vagina until your doctor tells you it is safe to do so.



Sexual activity

Depending on the type of surgery you had, you will need to avoid having sexual intercourse or putting anything in your vagina:

- For up to 8 weeks

AND

- Until your surgeon tells you it is ok to do so.

This will allow time for your body to heal. It may be possible to resume other types of sexual activity sooner.

If you have questions or concerns, discuss them with your health care provider.



Emotions

You may feel mixed emotions about the changes in your body after surgery. This is normal. Talk to your regular health care provider if you are concerned about the emotions that you are feeling.

If you have not already undergone menopause and have had both ovaries removed, you might undergo surgically-induced menopause.

- You may experience symptoms like hot flashes, mood swings or irritability. Discuss these symptoms with your doctor. Your Doctor can help you find solutions to reduce the effects of menopause that are right for you.





Health concerns

Who to Contact:

Call 911 if you have:

- Chest discomfort with sweating, nausea, faintness or shortness of breath
- Shortness of breath that gets worse and is not relieved by resting
- Fainting spells
- Bright red blood in stool or urine, or when you cough
- Sudden problems with speaking, walking or coordination

Call your Surgeon if you have:

- Bright red vaginal bleeding or vaginal bleeding that soaks more than one sanitary pad per hour
- A foul smelling discharge from the vagina
- Trouble urinating, burning when you urinate, or foul-smelling urine
- Severe pain or bloating in your abdomen
- Drainage from your incision that is persistent or changes in appearance or colour (i.e. yellow or green)
- Increased tenderness, redness or warmth around the surgery site
- Irritation or blisters from your dressing or tape
- Pain that is not relieved by your medication
- A fever spike (greater than or equal to 39° Celsius/102.2 Fahrenheit) with or without shakes and body chills
- High-grade fever (38.5° Celsius/101.3 degrees Fahrenheit and over) for 2 days or more
- Your calves (lower portion of your legs) become swollen and painful



Who to Contact:

If you cannot reach your surgeon:

- Call your family doctor, or
- Go to a walk-in medical clinic, or
- If it is after clinic hours, go to a hospital emergency department.

For non-emergency health information and services:

- Contact HealthLinkBC – a free-of-charge health information and advice phone line available in British Columbia.

HealthLinkBC



- phone: *8.1.1 from anywhere in BC.*
7.1.1 for deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY)
- email: www.healthlinkbc.ca
Translation services are available in over 130 languages.



Compliments and concerns

Quality care is important to all of us. You have the right to give feedback about your care and know you will be treated fairly. Your feedback gives us an opportunity to improve the care and services we provide.

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern, you can speak directly to the person providing your care, or you may contact the **Patient Care Quality Office**.

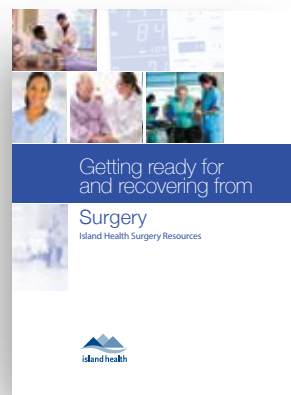


Patient Care Quality Office
Royal Jubilee Hospital
1952 Bay Street Victoria, BC V8R 1J8
Memorial Pavilion, Watson Wing, Rm 315
Toll-free: 1.877.977.5797 / Greater Victoria: 250.370.8323
patientcarequalityoffice@viha.ca
<https://www.islandhealth.ca/patients-visitors/patient-care-quality-office>



Resources

Other Island Health surgery resources you might find helpful:



Available at:



Island Health's Getting Ready for Surgery site:

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/surgery/getting-ready-surgery>



Island Health Surgery Resources

Tell us what you think!

After reading *this booklet* please respond to the following statements. Your answers and comments will help us improve the information.

Circle one number for each statement:



strongly
disagree

strongly
agree

I read all of the information provided.

1 2 3 4 5



Comments

The information is easy to read.

1 2 3 4 5



Comments

The information is easy to understand.

1 2 3 4 5



Comments

Reading this information helped me prepare for and recover from my surgery.

1 2 3 4 5



Comments

The information answered my questions.

1 2 3 4 5



Comments

I would recommend this information to other patients.

1 2 3 4 5



Comments

I prefer to have this information in:

_____ A book just like this one

_____ Separate handouts on each topic that I need

Comments

I would have liked MORE information about:

I would have liked LESS information about:

What changes would you make in this booklet to make it better?

I am: a patient a family member

Thank you!

Please mail this evaluation form to:

Manager of Surgical Quality

Surgical Services 2nd. Floor, Memorial Pavilion

Royal Jubilee Hospital

1952 Bay Street

Victoria, BC V8R 1J8





www.viha.ca