

Patient Information

General Surgery

Laparoscopic Fundoplication

About Laparoscopic Fundoplication

Laparoscopic is the medical term for keyhole surgery. Fundoplication is a surgical procedure carried out to treat severe gastro-oesophageal reflux (acid reflux/heart burn) and hiatus hernia (part of the stomach is lying in the chest). Gastro-oesophageal reflux is where the acid contents of the stomach flow back up into the oesophagus (food pipe). This can cause a burning sensation in your chest (heartburn) and in most people it is caused by the valve (sphincter) between the stomach and oesophagus not working properly. This acid can irritate the lining of the oesophagus (oesophagitis).

What does the procedure involve?

This is a surgical operation which involves making approximately 5 small cuts (incisions) in the abdomen to insert a telescope (camera) and some instruments. The abdomen is filled (inflated) with gas to allow access and visibility of the organs. Most of the gas will be removed at the end of the operation. Stitches and/or paper strips will be used to close the skin wounds.

The top part of the stomach is wrapped around the lower part of the gullet (oesophagus) and stitched to make a new valve to prevent the reflux of stomach contents back into the oesophagus (gullet). If you have a hiatus hernia, this will be repaired at the same time.

It is important to be aware that in a small number of cases the operation cannot be completed by keyhole surgery. In these cases the surgeon will need to proceed to an 'open' operation. This will require a larger incision in your abdomen and will result in a longer hospital stay.

How long will I be in hospital?

This procedure is normally carried out as a day case or with an overnight stay.

Intended benefits of the procedure

Having this procedure done by keyhole surgery reduces the recovery time and length of hospital stay. The procedure aims to:

- Relieve symptoms of reflux (like heart burn, regurgitation or vomiting)



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- Reduce the risk of strictures occurring following the continued scarring from the acid
- Stop the need to take acid suppression treatment (like Omeprazole or Ranitidine) long-term

What are the risks?

As with all operations, there is a small chance of complications. The risk of these is assessed on an individual basis depending upon each patient's fitness and this should be discussed with your specialist prior to surgery. However, overall this is a very safe operation. You should be aware that there is a small possibility of:

- Bleeding or injury to the oesophagus, stomach, abdominal organs
- Bowel/spleen injury, gas entering the chest cavity (pneumothorax) – these are rare complications
- Conversion to open procedure with a long incision
- As with all operations there is a risk of wound infection, chest infection and deep venous thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE).
- Hernia (weakness) may develop around one of the wound sites

Side effects of surgery

You will need to eat more slowly and take longer to chew your food. Some patients suffer from difficulty in swallowing, stomach bloating (called gas bloat), increased passage of wind (flatulence), feeling full quickly (early satiety) and weight loss. Most of these side effects are temporary (up to 3 months). You may also find that you are not able to burp or vomit easily after this operation.

Long term side effects are uncommon; occasionally there can be recurrence of reflux symptoms after a few years, though this is not common.

Before your operation

On the Ward

Before your operation you will be asked to wear a gown and anti-embolism stockings. These will reduce the risk of any blood clots developing in your leg.

In the operating theatre

The anaesthetist, operating department practitioners and nurses are likely to be present. An intravenous drip may be inserted. Monitoring devices will be attached to you, such as a blood pressure cuff, ECG leads (heart monitoring leads) and a pulse oximeter. A pulse oximeter is a peg with a red light, which is placed on your finger. It shows how much oxygen you have in your blood and is one of the monitors that an anaesthetist uses during your operation to ensure that you remain in the best of health. You may be given some oxygen to breathe.

After the Operation

- You will wake up in the recovery room after your operation. You will have an oxygen mask on your face to help you breathe. You might also wake up feeling sleepy.
- After this procedure, most people will have a small, plastic tube (cannula) in one of the veins of the arm. This might be attached to a bag of fluid (called a drip), which feeds your body with fluid until you are well enough to drink by yourself.
- While you are in the recovery room, a nurse will check your pulse and blood pressure regularly. When you are well enough to be moved, you will be taken to the ward.
- Sometimes, people feel sick or vomit after an operation, especially after a general anaesthetic. If you feel sick it is important to tell the nurse who will administer medicine to make you more comfortable.
- Immediately after the operation there will be discomfort in your shoulders from the distension of your tummy by the gas used during your operation. There will also be discomfort from the small cuts in the skin of the tummy, but this is well controlled with simple pain-killers. All the wounds are closed with stitches and/or paper strips. The nurses will tell you if and when the stitches need to be removed at your GP's surgery.

Once you are fully awake you will be taken to the ward to recover before you are accompanied home. Do not expect to feel completely normal immediately!

Eating and drinking

- You can drink a few hours after the operation and **eat a very soft “sloppy” diet** for approximately 2 weeks. This may include liquidised soup, smooth yoghurt, ice cream, custard, nutritious drinks, jellies, porridge and scrambled eggs.
- Swallowing difficulties usually get worse over the first 5-7 days before they start to improve, this is normal.
- Eat slowly, take a small mouthful and chew well before swallowing
- Gradually increase more solid foods such as soup, pasta, mashed vegetables and mince as you feel able, this may take a few weeks.
- **Avoid bread/toast, chips, chunky meat or vegetables** until you are happy that you can tolerate swallowing softer foods.
- It is advisable to drink plenty of water and **avoid fizzy drinks** as these will make you feel bloated.

Getting around and about

Patients are encouraged to get out of bed and walk around, on the day of your surgery. This will reduce the risk of complications such as clots in your leg and chest infections. Please continue to wear the anti-embolism stockings (white tights) provided for the first few days, until normal mobility is resumed.

Pain relief

You will be advised to **take regular painkillers** for the first few days, this is important to achieve a good recovery from your operation. Always read the patient information leaflet that comes with the medication and do not exceed the recommended dose, details of which are provided in the packet.

Shoulder tip pain is best relieved by changing position and gentle movements; this is normally caused by some gas left behind following surgery and will gradually disappear within a few days.

Discharge Home

When will I go home?

Some people who have this type of procedure leave hospital the same day (6-8pm) or the following morning; this will be decided by your consultant and whether any further swallow tests are needed. The actual time that you stay in hospital will depend on your general health and how quickly you recover from the procedure.

You will need to be accompanied home and have a responsible adult to care for you.

When can I resume normal activities including work?

It will take 7 to 14 days to recover at home and most people are back to their normal activities within 3 weeks. A doctor's sick note will be given to you before you go home and your GP will provide any additional sick notes.

Driving

You should not drive for at least 7-10 days after surgery.

How do I care for my wound?

- If your dressing is waterproof (shining) you can bath and shower. However if it is a woven material please do not get it wet. Remove your large dressings in 48 hours, but **do not remove the narrow paper strips**.
- Keep your wound clean and dry, by bathing and showering every day. Please dry your wound carefully; a "cool" hair-dryer works well.
- Most stitches do not need removing. The narrow paper strips will need to be gently peeled off in 5 days. You will be advised if you do require stitches to be removed.
- Please visit your GP practice nurse approximately 7 days after your operation to check your wound and remove any stitches.

Will I have a check-up?

An **out-patient clinic** appointment is usually made for **approximately 2-3 months** after surgery. Your GP can provide additional pain relief and advice and you can make an appointment for the practice nurse to check your wounds.

What if I have any problems at home?

If you experience any of the following problems whilst you are at home please immediately contact your own GP for minor wound problems or queries, or contact the Surgical Admissions Unit (SAU) ward 22 on 024 7696 6186 for all other problems.

- Difficulty swallowing especially after the first week
- Vomiting
- Severe pain
- Fever (39°C)
- Abdominal swelling
- Infection
- An oozing wound
- Reluctance to drink
- Poor urine output

Tell us about your experiences from your stay?

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The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 5931 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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Document History

Author	Jenny Abraham
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Published	March 2011
Reviewed	July 2013, April 2014, May 2016, May 2018
Review	April 2020
Version	6
Reference	HIC/LFT/1202/11