



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE

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PATIENT FACT SHEET Minimally Invasive Surgery

This fact sheet was developed in collaboration with The Society of Reproductive Surgeons

You may wonder how any surgery can be called "minimally invasive," but this type of surgery features small or no incisions. Surgeons view your body's organs with the help of small telescopes and tiny cameras. Surgical repairs are made with tiny instruments. Often, problems can be diagnosed and treated as part of one procedure.

Common procedures are:

- Laparoscopy, in which a telescope with a camera (called a laparoscope) is inserted through a small incision in your belly. This allows the surgeon to visually examine your pelvis (lower belly).
- Hysteroscopy, in which a different type of telescope with a camera (called a hysteroscope) is inserted through your vagina and cervix. It views the inside your uterus (womb).

Benefits of minimally invasive surgery

Fewer scars on the outside... An obvious benefit of minimally invasive surgery is that any scars are much smaller than in traditional "open" surgery. A laparoscopy requires one incision below the belly button, then one to three other incisions along the hairline of your lower belly. These incisions are usually 1/4-1/2 inch in length. Hysteroscopy leaves no scar because the instrument goes through the natural opening in the cervix (neck of the womb) from the vagina into the uterus.

...and fewer scars on the inside. In general, all surgery can cause adhesions or scar tissue on the tissue inside your lower belly. Minimally invasive surgery may cause less scarring.

Get well soon! After your minimally invasive surgery, you probably will be able to go home within 24 hours. If you have open surgery, you may have to stay in the hospital for 2 to 5 days. With minimally invasive surgery, you can recover at home, and you are less likely to have problems after surgery, such as infection or blood clots in your legs.

Less pain, less medication. Because your incisions are smaller, minimally invasive surgery is less painful than open surgery. This means you probably will need less pain medication and will likely recover more quickly.

Disadvantages of minimally invasive surgery

It's not for everyone. Minimally invasive surgery is more risky for patients who are obese or who have had previous "open" surgery in the upper or lower part of their belly or other medical problems. Your doctor may have other reasons to choose open, and not minimally invasive, surgery. Not all surgeries can be done with minimally invasive techniques.

Special training and equipment. Surgeons need special training and lots of practice before they can perform minimally invasive surgery; therefore, not all doctors are qualified to do these types of procedures. Also, not all hospitals have the special equipment necessary to do these kinds of surgeries.

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