

Cholelithiasis/ Cholecystectomy

Call 911 or an ambulance if your child:

- Struggles to take each breath
- Is unable to speak or cry
- Grunts with each breath
- Has blue or white lips or nails

Call the Surgery Team night or day if your child has any of the following symptoms:

- The pain is getting worse. The pain medicine is not working.
- Throwing up green liquid.
- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a couple of days.
- Looks or acts very sick.
- Is confused, has behavior changes or has had a seizure.
- A temperature of 101° F (38.4°C) or higher.
- Is an infant and has no wet diapers in 8 hours.
- No urine in 12 hours at any age.
- Is crying without tears.
- A dry mouth or cracked lips.

Note: Call the General Surgery Office 314.454.6022 during office hours. If after hours (nights, weekends, and holidays) call 314.454.6000 and ask for the Surgery Resident on-call to be paged.

Cholelithiasis (KOH-lee-lih-THY-uh-siss) happens when gallstones form in the gallbladder. Gallstones can be caused by groups of cholesterol (most common) or bile pigments. Gallstones can block the tubes that drain bile from the gallbladder and liver. They can even block the flow of digestive enzymes from the pancreas.

There are some conditions that increase the risk of getting gallstones. These include; Patients with a family history of Gallstones, Diabetes, Obesity, Pregnancy, Sickle Cell Anemia, Hereditary Spherocytosis, and Thalassemia Major.

What are the Signs and Symptoms?

- Pain in the belly. Usually the upper right side of the belly. Pain may happen with eating.
- Nausea (upset stomach)
- Vomiting (throwing up)
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin)
- Temperature higher than 100.4 F

Cholelithiasis/ Cholecystectomy

Important Information to Know:

- The most common test for gallstones is an abdominal ultrasound.
- The treatment for gallstones is a surgery called a Cholecystectomy (KOH-lee-siss-TEK-toh-mee)

What Happens before Surgery?

- Your child will not be able to eat or drink before surgery. We call this being NPO. You will be told what time to stop giving your child food or drink.
- Your child may have an intravenous (IV) catheter placed before surgery to give fluids.
- Your child will likely have a small amount of blood drawn for testing.

What Happens during Surgery?

- The surgery takes about 2 hours.
- Surgery is done under general anesthesia which means your child is asleep and doesn't feel any pain.
- The surgery can be done through a small incision (cut) to the upper right side of the belly. Or it can be done with four tiny cuts called laparoscopic surgery. These cuts will be in the belly button and the upper/lower parts of the belly. If the surgery is done laparoscopically, your child may have shoulder pain along with pain to the cuts.
- If needed, your child's surgeon may talk to you about a special study done to check for stones in the common bile duct. This test is called an intraoperative cholangiogram.

What Happens after Surgery?

- Your child will get IV fluids during and after surgery.
- Your child may get IV antibiotics during and after surgery.
- Your child will be taken to the recovery room after surgery. You can see your child when they wake up from the medicine that made them sleep during surgery.

Restrictions after Surgery:

- After going home from the hospital, your child may return to school as directed. This is usually a few days after surgery unless your child's doctor tells you otherwise.
- Your child's surgeon will tell you when they may return to gym, recess and other activities.
- **Follow-up appointment:** You will either be given a phone number to call for an appointment with the surgeon or one will be made for you.

Cholelithiasis/ Cholecystectomy

How do I Care for the Incision?

- ✓ The sutures that are used to close the cut will dissolve away on their own in a few weeks. You may not be able to see the sutures on the skin.
- ✓ There may be a clear or gauze bandage over the cut or cuts. You will be told when the bandage can come off. Under the bandage you may see small pieces of tape over the cut; these are called steri-strips. After 7 to 10 days the steri-strips may be taken off if they have not already fallen off.
- ✓ Your child may shower 2 days after the surgery.
- ✓ The surgeon will tell you when your child can sit in water.

For General Health Information and Resources:

Call or visit the [Family Resource Center](#), a health information library on the 3rd floor of the hospital. Call 314.454.2350, email at frc@bjc.org, or check out the FREE [St. Louis Children's Hospital Kid Care App](#).

