

Students

There may be students present during your consultation as part of their on-going training. Please let the staff know if you wish to be seen by a doctor only.

Who can I contact if I have a problem when I get home?

If you experience any problems related to your surgery or admission once you have been discharged home. Please feel free to contact the ward for advice from the nurse in charge. They will assist you via the telephone, advise you return to your GP or ask you to make your way to the emergency department at Whiston Hospital depending upon the nature of your concern.

Ward 4A– 0151 430 1420

Ward 4B– 0151 430 1637

Ward 4B– 0151 430 1643

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 426 1600



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Gallstones Information

This leaflet can be made available
in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供

Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona
w innych językach/formatach.

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What does my gall bladder do?

Your gall bladder is a small sac that lies beneath your liver, below the right rib cage. It stores and concentrates bile, which is a greenish/brown liquid produced by your liver. The bile is then passed into your small intestine through bile ducts, to help with digestion, mainly of fats.

What are gallstones?

Gallstones are collections of crystals of various substances in the bile. They look like small stones or gravel and they grow in the gall bladder. Around 5.5 million adults in the United Kingdom have gallstones. They are more common in women than men, but overweight people and those over 60 seem to be more at risk. Gallstones may stay in the gall bladder or move into the bile duct (the tube between your liver and intestine).

What are the symptoms of gallstones?

Not all gallstones cause symptoms – often, people do not know that they have them. However, common symptoms of gallstones include: upper abdominal pain, which can be central or towards the right side of your body. This pain can be severe and last for hours. It may be difficult to find a comfortable position to sit or lie down in, longer lasting pain under the rib cage on the right-hand side, with tenderness or pain when you move, nausea/bloating. **All these symptoms may be triggered by a fatty meal.**

If the gallstones move from your gall bladder into your bile duct, you may also experience: jaundice – yellowing of your skin or eyes, sometimes with dark urine or pale motions (stool). This may happen if the bile duct becomes blocked with gallstones, upper abdominal pain from inflammation (swelling) of your pancreas, known as pancreatitis, fever/high temperature caused by an infection from inflammation of the bile ducts (cholangitis) or the gall bladder (cholecystitis)

What tests are performed for gallstones?

Once gallstones are suspected, tests will need to be performed to confirm their presence and location. These include an abdominal ultrasound scan: this is very similar to a pregnancy scan.

Ultrasound devices use high frequency sound waves to create images of internal body structures. The sound waves bounce off tissues and are then picked up and displayed on a screen for your doctor to see. Ultrasound scans can identify the presence of gallstones, particularly in the gall bladder.

Blood tests: these may give information about the causes of your gallstones and whether they may have moved to the bile duct.
Endoscopic procedures: an instrument with a tiny camera or ultrasound on the end (called an endoscope) can be inserted through your mouth into the first part of the intestine to confirm the presence of stones in your bile duct, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) or Computerised Tomography (CT): in some cases, other scans such as MRI or CT may be helpful in diagnosing gallstones. If you would like more information, please ask for the leaflets: 'Having an MRI scan' and 'Having a CT scan'.

What is the treatment for gallstones?

There are a number of treatment options:

Treatment with medicines: IV Antibiotics

Surgery: To remove your gall bladder known as a cholecystectomy

Endoscopic treatment: An endoscope with a tiny camera and an inflatable balloon on the end can be used to remove stones lodged in your bile duct. This is done during an Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangio-Pancreatogram (ERCP) procedure.

Is there anything I can do to relieve my symptoms?

Eating fatty foods and large meals can often trigger the symptoms mentioned earlier. Reducing the size of your meals and eating a well balanced diet may reduce your symptoms whilst you are waiting to have treatment. If you need advice on healthy eating, please speak to your GP or consultant, who may consider a referral to a dietician.