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Patient
Information
for Consent

UG21lite Laparoscopic Heller's Cardiomyotomy

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Local information

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This document will give you information about a laparoscopic Heller's cardiomyotomy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP, or other relevant health professional.

What is achalasia?

Achalasia is a condition that causes problems with swallowing. It can also cause regurgitation (bringing food back into your mouth), chest pain and weight loss.

Achalasia happens when the lower oesophageal sphincter (the valve that controls how food passes into your stomach) does not relax properly.

What are the benefits of surgery?

The aim is to make it easier for you to swallow. The benefits will often last for a lifetime.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

The alternatives to surgery, such as eating more liquid food, treatment with medication and widening the valve will usually give only temporary relief from your symptoms.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes an hour to 90 minutes.

Your surgeon will make several small cuts on your abdomen. They will insert surgical instruments, along with a telescope, inside your abdomen and perform the operation.

Your surgeon will cut and spread apart the layers of muscle of the lower oesophageal sphincter and lower end of your oesophagus (see figure 1).

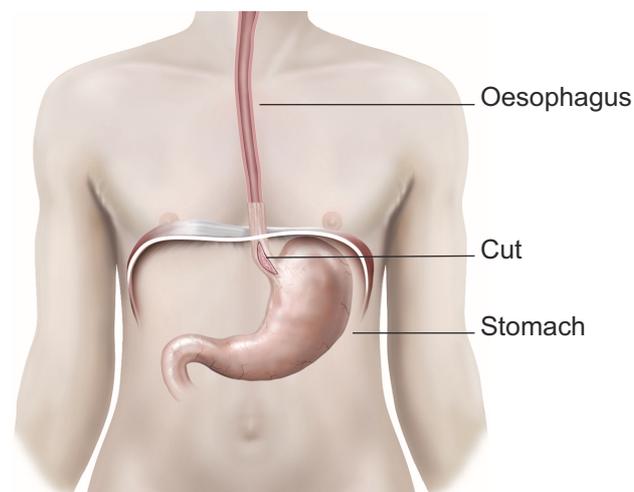


Figure 1
A Heller's cardiomyotomy

What complications can happen?

1 General complications

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Unsightly scarring
- Developing a hernia in the scar
- Blood clots

2 Specific complications

- Damage to structures such as your bowel, bladder or blood vessels
- Developing a hernia near one of the cuts
- Surgical emphysema
- Making a hole in your oesophagus or stomach
- Difficulty swallowing
- Developing acid reflux
- Pneumothorax

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home within a few days. You should be able to return to work after two weeks, depending on the extent of surgery and your type of work.

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a good recovery. 9 in 10 people have much improved swallowing and can eat a normal diet.

Summary

Achalasia is not life-threatening but the symptoms can be disabling. A Heller's cardiomyotomy is a dependable way to help you to swallow more easily for a long time.

Acknowledgements

Author: Mr Ian Beckingham DM FRCS
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