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UG20lite Anti-Reflux Surgery

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This document will give you information about anti-reflux surgery. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is acid reflux?

Acid reflux is a condition where acid from the stomach travels up into the oesophagus (gullet). This happens if the valve between the stomach and the oesophagus does not work effectively. Acid reflux can cause 'heartburn' or acid in the back of the mouth.

What are the benefits of surgery?

Surgery is aimed at curing the symptoms of acid reflux.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Drugs that lower the acid content in the stomach are effective at controlling symptoms and healing inflammation. Surgery is recommended only if the symptoms continue or if you feel that you would prefer not to stay on medication.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes between one and two hours.

Your surgeon may use the laparoscopic (keyhole) technique. Your surgeon will make several small cuts on your abdomen. They will place surgical instruments, along with a telescope, inside your abdomen and perform the operation (see figure 1).

Your surgeon will stitch the diaphragm to reduce the size of the hole the oesophagus passes through. They will then wrap and stitch the top part of the stomach around the lower oesophagus.

Your surgeon can wrap the stomach all the way round the oesophagus or just part-way round.

The abdominal cavity is inflated with carbon dioxide gas to help with surgery

A telescope and instruments allow your surgeon to examine the abdomen

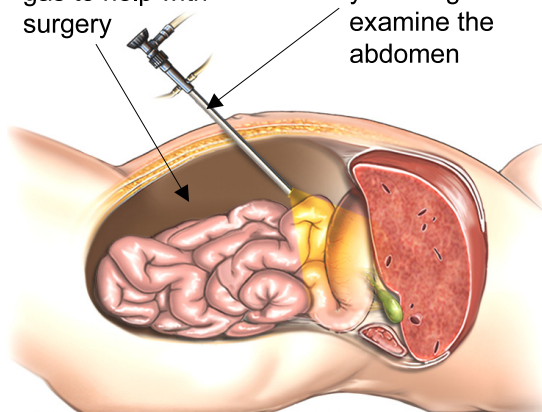


Figure 1

The technique for laparoscopic surgery

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 internal organs
- Developing a hernia near one of the cuts
- Surgical emphysema
- Difficulty swallowing
- Air in the chest cavity
- Making a hole in the oesophagus or stomach
- Tear of the stitches used for the wrap
- Damage to the liver

Long-term problems

- Incomplete control of reflux symptoms
- Weight loss
- Abdominal discomfort
- Diarrhoea

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 three to four 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, you should ask a member of the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

You should make a full recovery, with the symptoms of acid reflux gone or much improved.

Summary

Acid reflux can cause heartburn or acid in the mouth. The acid can cause the lining of the oesophagus to become inflamed or scarred. Surgery may be recommended if your symptoms continue while you are on medication.

Acknowledgements

Author: Mr Simon Parsons DM FRCS (Gen. Surg.) and Mr Ian Beckingham DM FRCS

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