

Emergency Laparotomy

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This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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Your surgeon recommends an emergency laparotomy.

What are the benefits of surgery?

Your tests show that you have a life-threatening problem inside your abdomen.

Your surgeon will perform the procedures you need to repair the damage and help you to recover.

Are there any alternatives to surgery?

Some problems such as bleeding can sometimes be treated by an endoscopy or a radiology-assisted procedure. An obstruction may clear on its own. Antibiotics can be used to treat an infection.

What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and may take several hours.

Your surgeon will examine your abdomen to assess the damage. They will perform the procedures you need to repair the damage. This may involve removing organs such as your spleen, and removing sections from your stomach and bowel.

Your surgeon may need to make a colostomy or ileostomy (your bowel opening onto your skin).

Your surgeon will insert drains (tubes) in your abdomen to drain away fluid that can sometimes collect.

What complications can happen?

- Bleeding
- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Acute kidney injury
- Developing a hernia in the scar
- Blood clots in your legs or in your lungs
- Damage to your stomach or bowel
- Continued bowel paralysis
- Sepsis, which is a life-threatening infection
- Incorrect diagnosis

- Death
- Chest infection

Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Unsightly scarring

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after 7 to 14 days. However, you may need to stay in hospital for another operation.

Your recovery will depend on the extent of your surgery, your age and if you have other medical problems. Physiotherapy and good pain relief can help.

It may take many months for you to fully recover.

[Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.](#)

[Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.](#)

[This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.](#)

Acknowledgements

Reviewer

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Illustrator

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