

# What to expect from a keyhole hysterectomy

Senior consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist Irene Chua shares what women can expect from a keyhole hysterectomy, the risks involved and how to recover after the procedure



Factors like uterus size and torso length will affect which surgical route a hysterectomy will take. PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

If you suffer from perpetual heavy menstrual bleeding, large fibroids or precancerous changes in the inner lining of the uterus, your doctor may recommend a hysterectomy, which is the removal of the uterus.

However, this is usually considered as a last resort when all other forms of treatment have not been successful. Here, Mount Alvernia Hospital senior consultant obstetrician and gynaecologist Irene Chua unpacks the procedure and shares how patients can recover well.

## Q What are the types of hysterectomy procedures and what are the risks involved?

A hysterectomy can be done via open surgery with a horizontal bikini incision, vaginally or through keyhole surgery, which is also known as a laparoscopic hysterectomy.

To determine which surgical route to take, your doctor will look at the size of your uterus and any previous surgeries you have undergone. At times, the body frame may also play a role, for instance how long your torso is and how wide your pelvic bones are.

The risks involved in a hysterectomy are the same regardless of which surgical procedure is done. These would be bleeding, infection and injury to the surrounding bowel or bladder.

## Q How is a laparoscopic hysterectomy performed and what incisions will be made?

In a laparoscopic hysterectomy, four small holes will be made in the abdomen.

The largest one is 1cm in diameter and the other three are 5mm each. Telescopes and instruments

will be inserted through the ports and, using electrocautery, the blood vessels are secured and the uterus removed step by step under direct vision.

## Q What is the recovery like after a keyhole surgery, and how should I care for myself?

After a keyhole hysterectomy, most women will have a good rest and sleep that very day. Most will be able to get out of bed and move around in their room the next day after breakfast.

Typically, the patient will be confident to go home after three days. In the first week, we would encourage moving around in the house, but do not carry heavy items.

It is advisable to eat healthily for better recovery. Avoid anything too oily or spicy and take food with more vitamin C, as well as a good portion of protein. Probiotics are also useful.

## Q What physical changes can I expect after going through a hysterectomy?

There could be some light vaginal bleeding for up to two months post-surgery as the internal wound continues to heal. Post-surgical pain can also be expected for one to three weeks depending on the route of surgery.



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