

Having keyhole surgery to remove lymph glands

Women's & Children's Division

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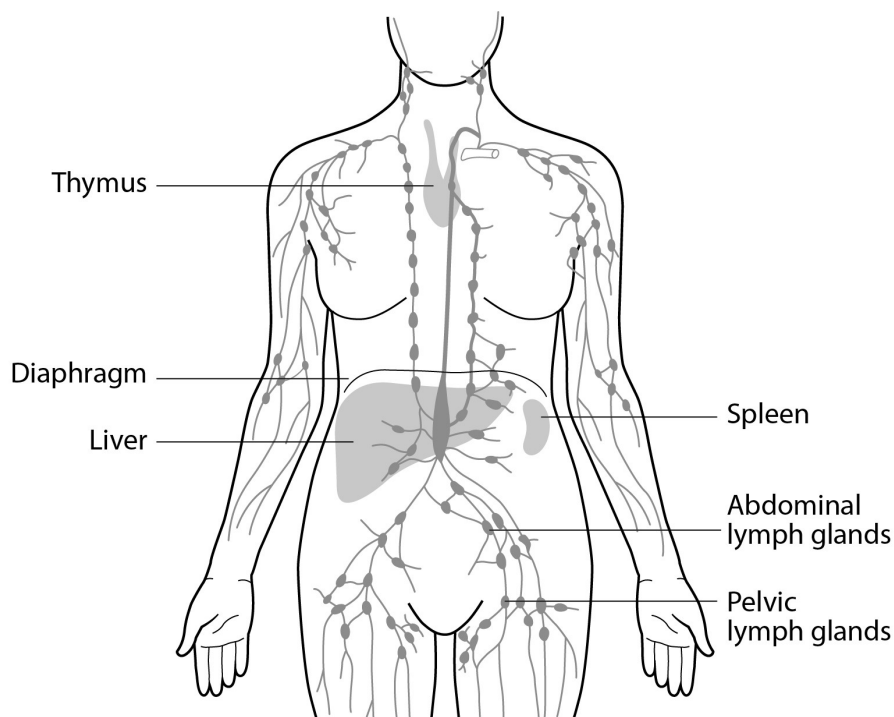
Information for Patients

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Introduction

You have been told recently that you have womb (endometrial) cancer. You have been given the opportunity to discuss this diagnosis with your clinical nurse specialist (key worker), who has given you information and support.

Every week the gynaecology oncology team looking after you have a weekly meeting, known as the multidisciplinary team (MDT) meeting. The MDT has looked at the results of the tests you have had so far. The MDT has recommended that, due to the type of cancer cells found in the womb cancer you have, you should have your abdominal lymph glands removed (see diagram below).



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What are lymph glands?

There are lymph glands all over your body (see diagram). They drain fluid from the tissues and return it to your circulation and are important in helping your body to fight infection

Sometimes these glands are affected by cancer. Removing them will help us to understand the spread of your cancer and allow us to plan the treatment that is right for you.

Why do the lymph glands need removing?

Removing your abdominal lymph glands will give us more information about how far your cancer has spread (the stage of your cancer). This will help us decide on which treatment to offer you so that we can offer you the best chance of your cancer being removed and to reduce the risk of your cancer coming back.

In view of the potential risks of the procedure (see below) and the uncertainty of the long term benefits of the procedure, you may choose not to have the lymph glands removed during your operation. When you sign your consent form your doctor will ask you about this. You may also be asked if you want to take part in research study and further information about this will be given to you as appropriate.

How are the lymph glands removed?

During the laparoscopic (keyhole) operation to remove your cancer your surgeon will be able to remove the lymph glands from your abdomen and pelvis (see diagram).

Removing the lymph glands will increase the time your operation takes.

What are the risks and complications?

The main risks of having lymph gland removal are:

Bleeding

The lymph glands are close to (or wrapped around) the major blood vessels in your body and there is a risk of bleeding. You may need a blood transfusion.

Risk of blood clot

There is a small risk of you having a blood clot as a result of the operation. Due to a longer anaesthetic your risk may be increased slightly. You will have blood thinning injections to reduce your risk and will have these for up to a month after surgery. You will be asked to wear anti-embolism stockings and encouraged to move around as soon as you are able.

Lymph fluid collection

This is sometimes called a lymph cyst. This is when a pocket of lymph fluid collects and forms a cyst. Your body will allow this to heal on its own.

Swollen legs (lymphoedema)

As you have had lymph glands removed during your operation, there is a **small risk** of developing lymphoedema. This is a collection of lymph fluid in your legs which will make them swell.

The following advice will help to prevent this:

- Use a moisturising cream or aqueous cream, to stop your skin from becoming dry or cracked.
- Do not have very hot baths, or use hot water bottles, saunas and ice packs.

- Use sun protection creams and take care not to burn.
- Use an insect repellent cream to prevent bites.
- Avoid having injections into your legs.
- Try to avoid scratches and cuts to your legs. If this happens, wash and clean them with a simple antiseptic. If you notice any signs of skin redness or soreness, contact your GP.
- Use an electric razor or hair removal cream to remove unwanted hair on legs. Do not use a razor blade.
- Take care when cutting your toenails; use nail clippers rather than scissors.

Contact details

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact:

Gynaecology-oncology nurse specialists (key workers): 0116 258 4840 (8am to 4pm)

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