What is laparoscopy?

Laparoscopy (pronounced “la-puh-ros-kuh-pee”) is a surgical procedure in which a surgeon makes a small incision just below the belly button and inserts a needle into the area. The area is then filled with carbon dioxide gas to inflate the area which allows for a better view for the surgeon. A thin, lighted camera called a laparoscope is then inserted into the abdomen. It is used to look directly at the contents of a patient’s abdomen or pelvis, including the fallopian tubes, ovaries, uterus, bowels, appendix, liver and gallbladder.

Why is the procedure done?

Laparoscopy is done to:
- Check for and remove possible abnormal growths of the belly or pelvis
- Detect or diagnose conditions such as:
  - Appendicitis
  - Cancer, especially ovarian cancer
  - Endometriosis
  - Ectopic pregnancy
  - Inflammation of the gallbladder
  - Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID)
- Check for conditions that make it hard for women to become pregnant such as cysts, fibroids, and infection
- See if cancer from another area of the body has spread to the abdomen or pelvis
- Fix a hernia
- Remove organs such as the spleen, gallbladder, uterus, ovaries or appendix
- Distinguish the cause of ongoing pelvic pain

How to prepare for the procedure?

It is important that the doctor knows of all allergies and medications prior to the surgery, especially blood thinners such as Plavix, Coumadin (warfarin), Pradaxa and aspirin. Women should inform the doctor if they could be pregnant.

It is important to not eat or drink anything 8 hours prior to laparoscopic surgery. A person may be asked to take an enema several hours prior to surgery to empty the contents of their colon. Also, closer to the time of the procedure a person’s bladder will have to be emptied.

A person having laparoscopic surgery should have someone ready to take them home following the procedure as they will be unable to operate a motor vehicle immediately following surgery.
Health Tips: Laparoscopy

What to expect
Prior to surgery, an IV tube will be placed in a vein in the arm that will supply fluids and medications during the procedure. Once a person has been placed under anesthesia some other procedures may occur such as:
• A tube placed in the throat to help with breathing during the procedure
• A thin flexible tube called a catheter may be placed into the urethra
• A person’s belly and pelvic area will be cleaned with a special soap
• A person’s pubic hair may be shaved
• The surgeon will then perform the procedure which takes 30-90 minutes, depending on the intended reason for the surgery. Following the procedure, the person will be taken to a recovery room for 2-4 hours and then should be allowed to go home.

What are the risks?
The surgeon will do everything to minimize risks, however like all operations, laparoscopy has risks such as:
• Bleeding from the incisions
• Infection
• Damage to organs or blood vessels

What happens after the procedure?
Following the procedure, a patient may notice:
• Bloating
• Pain and bruising near the incisions
• Pain or achiness in the shoulder as a result of gas from the procedure.
• A crackling sound when rubbing the skin near the stitches from gas that has leaked into the skin

When to contact the surgeon?
The surgeon should be contacted if any of the following symptoms occur:
• A large area of redness or swelling around the incision
• Bleeding or drainage
• Fever, as this could be a sign of infection
• Severe belly pain
• Hoarseness in a person’s voice that lasts for more than a couple of days or gets worse