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## Abdominal exploration



Abdominal exploration is surgery to look at the organs and structures in your belly area (abdomen). This includes your:

- Appendix
- Bladder
- Gallbladder
- Intestines
- Kidney and ureters
- Liver
- Pancreas
- Spleen
- Stomach
- Uterus, fallopian tubes, and ovaries (in women)

Surgery that opens the abdomen is called a laparotomy.

### Description

Exploratory laparotomy is done while you are under general anesthesia, which means you are asleep and feel no pain.

The surgeon makes a cut into the abdomen and examines the abdominal organs. The size and location of the surgical cut depends on the specific health concern.

A [biopsy](#) can be taken during the procedure.

Laparoscopy describes a group of procedures that are performed with a camera placed in the abdomen. If possible, laparoscopy will be done instead of laparotomy.

### Why the Procedure is Performed

Your doctor may recommend a laparotomy if imaging tests of the abdomen, such as [x-rays](#) and [CT scans](#), have not provided an accurate diagnosis.

Exploratory laparotomy may be used to help diagnose and treat many health conditions, including:

- [Cancer](#) of the ovary, colon, pancreas, liver
- [Endometriosis](#)
- [Gallstones](#)
- Hole in the intestine (intestinal perforation)
- Inflammation of the appendix ([acute appendicitis](#))
- Inflammation of an intestinal pocket ([diverticulitis](#))
- Inflammation of the pancreas ([acute](#) or [chronic pancreatitis](#))
- [Liver abscess](#)
- Pockets of infection (retroperitoneal abscess, [abdominal abscess](#), pelvic abscess)
- Pregnancy outside of the uterus ([ectopic pregnancy](#))
- Scar tissue in the abdomen ([adhesions](#))

### Risks

Risks of any anesthesia include the following:

- Severe medication reaction
- Problems breathing

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Risks of any surgery include the following:

- Bleeding
- Infection
- Damage to nearby structures

Additional risks include incisional [hernia](#).

### Outlook (Prognosis)

You should be able to start eating and drinking normally about 2 - 3 days after the surgery. How long you stay in the hospital depends on the severity of the problem. Complete recovery usually takes about 4 weeks.

### Alternative Names

Laparotomy; Exploratory laparotomy

### References

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