

Diagnostic Laparoscopy

What Is A Diagnostic Laparoscopy?

Diagnostic laparoscopy is a minimally invasive surgical procedure that allows a gynaecologist to view the inside of the abdomen and pelvis. This procedure is often used to diagnose conditions that may be causing symptoms such as chronic pelvic pain, infertility, or unexplained bleeding. Diagnostic laparoscopy is commonly performed when other non-invasive methods, such as ultrasound or MRI, have not provided a clear diagnosis.

Why You Might Need A Diagnostic Laparoscopy

There are several reasons why your doctor may recommend a diagnostic laparoscopy, including:

- **Unexplained pelvic pain:** Chronic or acute pelvic pain that has not been diagnosed through other methods.
- **Endometriosis:** Suspected endometriosis that hasn't been confirmed by imaging techniques.
- **Infertility:** To investigate possible causes of infertility, such as blocked fallopian tubes or pelvic adhesions.
- **Pelvic inflammatory disease (PID):** To assess the extent of damage or scarring caused by PID.
- **Ovarian cysts:** To evaluate ovarian cysts or masses that have been detected on ultrasound.
- **Ectopic pregnancy:** To diagnose or confirm the presence of an ectopic pregnancy, where a fertilised egg implants outside the uterus.
- **Unexplained bleeding:** For cases of abnormal uterine bleeding where other diagnostic tests are inconclusive.

The Procedure

A diagnostic laparoscopy is typically performed under general anaesthesia, meaning you will be asleep during the procedure. A small incision, usually about 1 to 2 centimetres, is made near the navel. Through this incision, a laparoscope—a thin, lighted tube with a camera—is inserted into the abdomen. Carbon dioxide gas is used to inflate the abdomen, which helps the surgeon see the organs more clearly.

Additional small incisions may be made in the lower abdomen to insert other surgical instruments, if necessary. These tools allow the gynaecologist to move organs for better viewing or to take tissue samples (biopsies) for further testing.

The procedure typically lasts between 30 minutes to an hour, depending on the complexity of the case and whether any other surgical interventions are required.

During a diagnostic laparoscopy, it is common not to find any significant abnormalities. However, if minor issues such as small areas of endometriosis or minor scar tissue are detected, they can often be treated during the same procedure. In cases where more complex problems are identified, a follow-up surgery may be required on a different day to address these issues effectively.

Advantages Of Laparoscopic (Keyhole) Surgery

Laparoscopic surgery offers several benefits over traditional open surgery:

- **Faster recovery and shorter hospital stay:** You typically experience a quicker recovery time and may be discharged from the hospital sooner.
- **Less pain and bleeding:** The minimally invasive nature of the procedure generally results in reduced pain and less bleeding compared to traditional surgery.
- **Reduced scarring:** The small incisions used in keyhole surgery lead to minimal scarring, enhancing both cosmetic and physical outcomes.

Recovery And Aftercare

After the procedure, you will be monitored as you wake from the anaesthesia. Most patients can go home the same day, but in some cases, an overnight stay may be required.

You may experience some mild discomfort in the days following the procedure, including:

- **Shoulder pain:** Caused by the carbon dioxide gas used during the procedure, which can irritate the diaphragm and cause referred pain in the shoulder.
- **Abdominal bloating:** Due to the gas still present in the abdomen.
- **Soreness at the incision sites:** These should be kept clean and dry to prevent infection.

Your gynaecologist will provide specific aftercare instructions, including how to care for your incisions, what pain relief you can take, and when you can resume normal activities. It's generally recommended to avoid strenuous activities for at least a week after the procedure.

Risks And Complications

Diagnostic laparoscopy is generally safe, but like any surgical procedure, it carries some risks. Potential complications include:

- **Infection:** There is a small risk of infection at the incision sites or within the abdomen.
- **Bleeding:** Although rare, there is a risk of internal bleeding.
- **Injury to internal organs:** The laparoscope or other instruments could potentially injure organs such as the bowel, bladder, or blood vessels.
- **Adverse reaction to anaesthesia:** Some patients may have an allergic reaction or other complications related to the anaesthesia.

Your gynaecologist will discuss these risks with you before the procedure and take steps to minimise them.

Results And Follow-Up

In many cases, your gynaecologist will be able to give you preliminary findings immediately after the procedure. If a biopsy was taken, the results might take a few days to come back. Based on the findings, your doctor will discuss the next steps with you, which may include further treatment or surgery. It's important to attend all follow-up appointments to ensure proper healing and to discuss any additional treatment that may be necessary based on the laparoscopy findings.

Why Choose Birmingham Gynaecology Clinic

At **Birmingham Gynaecology Clinic**, we offer expert diagnostic laparoscopy to accurately identify gynaecological conditions that may not be detectable through other methods. Our experienced specialists ensure that you receive the highest standard of care, with a focus on your comfort and understanding throughout the process.

Contact Us

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please contact Birmingham Gynaecology Clinic. Our team is here to support you with expert care at every step.