How to Prepare: Laparoscopy Recovery

A little preparation before the operation makes the recovery days much smoother:

- ☐ Arrange a lift home and an adult to stay with you the first night — you cannot drive after a general anaesthetic, and you should not be alone.
- ☐ Stock up beforehand: simple painkillers you normally use, easy food, and loose high-waisted clothes that will not press on the dressings.
- ☐ Plan gentle days: most people need a few days to a week off work depending on the operation and their job — ask your surgeon what applies to you.
- ☐ Organise help for lifting: avoid heavy lifting (including small children and full shopping bags) for the period your team advises, often a week or two.
- ☐ Know your follow-up: when dressings come off, whether stitches dissolve, and when results of anything removed — for example the gallbladder or appendix — will reach you.
- ☐ Save the ward's phone number somewhere handy: knowing who to call with a worry is part of a calm recovery.

What to expect

Before — in hospital	You wake in recovery with a sore throat from the anaesthetic tube, small dressings on your tummy, and sometimes a drip. Nurses watch your blood pressure, pulse and wounds while the anaesthetic wears off.
During — the first week	Expect soreness around the cuts and inside the tummy for two to four days, eased by regular simple painkillers, together with the shoulder-tip ache from the gas.
After — back to normal	By one to two weeks most people feel much more themselves: driving usually resumes when you can brake sharply and turn comfortably, work depends on how physical the job is, and exercise builds back gradually. Tiredness can linger a few weeks.

Medically reviewed by Dr. Mohamed Ibrahim, MD, PhD — physician-scientist. Last reviewed October 2026.

This handout is general information to help you prepare; it does not replace the instructions from your own care team. If your clinic gave you different instructions, follow theirs.