



North Valley Surgical Associates, PC

General & Minimally Invasive Surgery

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GALLBLADDER SURGERY

WHAT IS THE GALLBLADDER?

The gallbladder is a pear-shaped sac that rests beneath the right side of the liver. Its main purpose is to collect and concentrate digestive bile produced by the liver. Bile is released from the gallbladder to help digest food.

WHAT ARE GALLSTONES?

Most gallbladder problems are caused by gallstones that form when the components of bile (generally cholesterol and bile pigments) form small, hard masses. They may be as small as a grain of sand or as large as a golf ball. Gallstones form when bile contains too much cholesterol, the gallbladder does not contract and empty properly or when a high concentration of protein is present in the liver. These factors may be related, genetic or both.

ARE THERE SYMPTOMS OF GALLSTONES?

Many people have no symptoms and gallstones go undetected until they are discovered during a routine check-up. Others experience sharp abdominal pain, vomiting and indigestion. Left untreated, large stones are known to contribute to cancer.

WHAT TREATMENT OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE?

The physicians of North Valley Surgical Associates most often remove gallstones by a minimally invasive procedure called laparoscopic cholecystectomy. Using a general anesthesia, the physician makes a series of small incisions in the abdomen. Surgical instruments and a tiny video camera are inserted. The camera sends a magnified image to a monitor near the surgeon, through which he or she can view the area and gently remove the gallbladder and stones.

If the gallbladder is very inflamed, prior surgery has caused scarring or the stones have traveled from the gallbladder to the bile duct, traditional open surgery may be necessary. Recovery time increases to a few weeks due to the larger (5" to 6") incision.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF LAPAROSCOPIC CHOLECYSTECTOMY?

Laparoscopic cholecystectomy does not require the abdominal muscles to be cut, resulting in less pain, quicker healing, minimal scarring and fewer complications compared with traditional surgery. Patients usually return home within 24 hours and function at full capacity in about a week.

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