

After a gynecologic cancer surgery

Surgery (to be filled in): _____

Recovering from a gynecologic cancer surgery

Depending on the type of surgery, recovery usually takes between 2 to 4 weeks. Physical recovery is usually faster after a laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery. **Exercising as you strength allows**, getting sufficient rest and eating a varied diet will improve your general fitness and help you to recover faster from the surgery. You can start driving when you feel well enough to do so. You received support stocking from the ward; you will need to wear them daily until you are being as active as you were before your surgery. Support stockings are important for **preventing the formation of blood clots**.

Avoid strenuous physical activity, sudden movements, lifting and reaching until the last week of your sick-leave. On the final week of your sick-leave you can slowly start to return back to your normal daily routine. If your operation was an open surgery, avoid heavier chores and strenuous activities for the duration of the sick-leave to protect the surgical wound.

At home medication

The surgery area can still cause pain after you have returned home. You will receive a prescription for pain medication when you are discharged from the hospital. It is recommended that you take the pain medication regularly at first, because the pain medication will also reduce swelling around the surgical wound.

Usually, to prevent blood clots, **patients are started on an injectable subcutaneous medication** after the surgery. The treatment will last from 1 to 4 weeks depending on the operation. You will receive instructions on how to inject the medication at the ward.

Removal of functional ovaries may cause menopausal symptoms. If necessary, and depending on the type of tumor removed, you may receive a prescription for hormone replacement therapy medication, or other medication that will relieve your symptoms.

Bowel movements

We recommend eating a varied diet and drinking enough liquids to promote regular bowel movements. If necessary, you can use plums, bran, and laxatives available from pharmacies.

Individual instructions

Postoperative bleeding and hygiene after hysterectomy

It is normal to have postoperative bleeding from the vagina for 1 to 4 weeks. To prevent the risk of infection, we recommend that you do not bath or swim during this time. The sutures in the vagina are absorbable. We recommend against having intercourse for 4 weeks after the surgery because the surgical wound is in the top of the vagina near the cervix. We recommend using a shower to get clean. You can use the sauna one week after your operation.

Open or laparoscopic surgery

The dressings are removed on the third morning after the surgery, after which you can clean the wound with tepid running water. The sutures are absorbable or the stitches / surgical staples will be removed on (fill in the date): _____.

External genital surgery

To prevent the risk of infection, swimming, intercourse, using tampons and medication that is inserted into the vagina is forbidden for 4 to 6 weeks after the surgery. Sitting is forbidden until (fill in the date): _____ after the surgery to avoid creating extra pressure around the surgery area.

We recommend that you air out your wound / wounds daily. We recommend against using tight-fitting underwear and pants. Spray the wound daily using tepid water. Pat the wound area dry carefully with a clean towel. The sutures are absorbable.

If pelvic lymph nodes have been removed during the surgery

You may experience swelling of the legs. The swelling develops because the lymph cannot circulate around the lymphatic channels as normal, and collects in the tissues instead. The tendency to develop swelling can last for a long time. Using support stockings and doing exercises that reduce swelling will ease the symptoms. You can read more at: [Aktivoiva lymfajumppa alavartalolle.pdf](#) (in Finnish and Swedish only).

Follow-up care

The histological samples that were taken during the surgery have been sent to a pathologist for a microscopic examination. You will be contacted after the final results are ready, and you will receive a postoperative follow-up appointment or an appointment for possible future treatments. You can later review information regarding your care and a report of your treatment (discharge summary) from the Omakanta service (<https://www.kanta.fi/en/my-kanta-pages>). If you want us to send your discharge summary to you by mail, please let the nurse treating you know.

In case of problems

Contact the hospital responsible for your care if you experience any of the following problems during your recovery:

- pain that becomes more intense or pain that becomes different
- heavy bleeding or foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- the surgical wound or the area surrounding it becomes painful, red, swollen or hard
- the wound starts to ooze bloody fluid or puss
- fever where your temperature rises above 37.5 Celsius repeatedly
- intestinal dysfunction, diarrhea, vomiting
- difficulty urinating (difficulty passing urine, frequent urination, burning sensation)