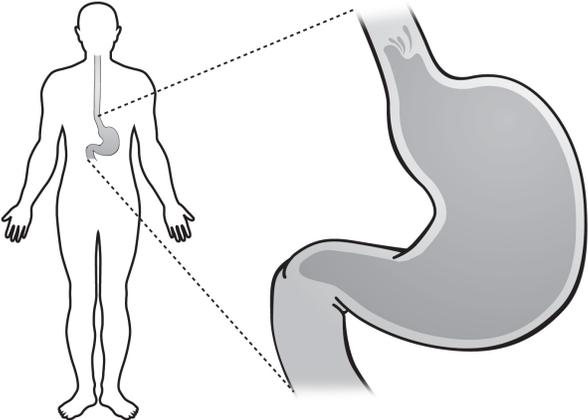


# Heller Myotomy

For patients with achalasia who are preparing for surgery

**Before surgery**



**After surgery**



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## **Why do I need achalasia surgery (Heller myotomy)?**

People with achalasia [ay-kuh-lay-zhuh] have trouble swallowing. This happens when the muscles around the lower part of the throat, called the “lower esophageal sphincter” (LES), do not relax to let food to pass into the stomach.

Treating achalasia will help food pass into the stomach by decreasing the pressure in the LES.

## **What are the signs and symptoms?**

Common symptoms are:

- the feeling of food, liquid or both being stuck in the lower chest (dysphagia)
- burning chest pain after eating (indigestion)
- regurgitation of bitter tasting fluid or partially digested food up into the throat or mouth.

Other symptoms are coughing, asthma or other breathing problems.

**Whether you have a laparoscopic or open Heller myotomy, this surgery will improve your swallowing and help relieve your heartburn.**

## **Preparing for your surgery at TGH**

You should get a copy of our **Day Surgery at Toronto General Hospital** booklet. This booklet has most of the information that you will need to know before your Heller myotomy surgery. If you did not get a copy of this booklet, please talk to a member of your healthcare team.



## Going home after your surgery

### What can I eat and drink?

For the first week (7 days) after your Heller myotomy surgery, you can take a full or thick liquid diet such as milkshakes, puddings, soups and mashed potatoes.

If you can eat these foods without any problems, you can then start having soft foods.

- **Do NOT drink carbonated beverages, like soda pop**
- **Do NOT eat crusty breads, bagels, tough meats, and raw vegetables that may be hard to swallow**



### What activities are safe after Heller myotomy surgery?

After your Heller myotomy, follow these instructions to help you get back to your regular daily activities:

- You can drive 1 week after surgery. Do NOT drive if you are taking pain medication because it can make you sleepy.
- Each day after your surgery you should be walking around comfortably.
- You can walk up and down stairs. Walking helps your blood circulation, bowels and breathing get back to normal.
- You will feel some discomfort when you cough or sneeze. Holding a pillow closely against your stomach while coughing or sneezing will help.
- You can have sex again when you feel better.
- If you are admitted to hospital overnight, it will be helpful if your family and friends help you while you are in the hospital and also when you get home.

**Do NOT lift anything heavier than 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms (like a bag of flour) for 6 weeks after your Heller myotomy.**



## **When can I shower?**

You can shower 1 day after your Heller myotomy. Pat your incision (cut) dry with a clean towel after showering.

You may have a tub bath after 1 week.



## **How do I take care of my surgical incision?**

A dressing of steri-strips (small tapes) will be placed over your incision (surgical cut). Your nurse may change your dressing before you go home.

- Keep your incision clean and dry. The steri-strips will fall off in 1 or 2 weeks. If they do not fall off on their own, you should carefully remove them.
- Check your incision every day for signs of infection, such as:
  - redness
  - swelling
  - pus
  - pain around the incision site that does not go away

**If you see any of these signs, please see your family doctor right away.**

## How do I manage my pain after surgery?

It is important to be as comfortable as possible after your surgery.

Your surgeon will give you a prescription for pain medication before you go home. Fill this prescription right away at your pharmacy and take this medication before your pain becomes bad.

- The surgeon will tell you when to start taking your usual medications again.

**Do NOT drink alcohol or drive while taking these medications because they may make you sleepy.**



**Call your doctor or go to the nearest Emergency room if any of the following happens:**

- You have redness, swelling, bleeding or drainage of pus from your incision site.
- You cannot swallow fluids or your own saliva.
- You are having pain that does not go away even when you take your pain medication.
- You have a fever higher than 38 °C or 100 °F and/or you are having chills.
- You have a cough, shortness of breath, chest pain, or severe nausea and vomiting.
- You are having pain, swelling or both in your feet, calves, and legs.
- You are constipated (you have not had a bowel movement for **3 days**.)

## **My follow-up visit after Heller myotomy surgery**

Before you go home, we will give you a follow-up appointment with your surgeon. Please bring your health card (OHIP) with you.

Call your surgeon's office to make an appointment if one has not been made for you.

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Appointment date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Who can I call if I have questions?**

If you have any questions when you are at home after your Heller myotomy, please call the Nurse Navigator at 416 262 1992.

Visit [www.uhnpatienteducation.ca](http://www.uhnpatienteducation.ca) for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: [pfep@uhn.ca](mailto:pfep@uhn.ca)

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