Understanding Minimally Invasive Surgery

Fewer stitches, faster recovery

Shomaf Nakhjo, DO, board-certified general surgeon with training in laparoscopic and minimally invasive surgery, and Cynthia M. Jones, MD, FACS, specialist in general, laparoscopic and breast surgery for Newton Medical Center, answer some frequently asked questions about the procedure.

Q: WHAT IS MINIMALLY INVASIVE SURGERY?

A: Dr. Nakhjo: Minimally invasive surgery uses a laparoscope. This is a long, thin tube with a miniature camera attached at the end. This tube is inserted into the body through a small incision. The image is sent to a screen that the surgeon watches to perform the operation.

Q: HOW DOES IT WORK?

A: Dr. Jones: Minimally invasive surgery has reached into virtually every specialty now. We try to obtain the most information we can in the least invasive way. For breast cases, if there's a lesion seen on an ultrasound or on mammogram images, we can do a quick procedure -





Cynthia M. Jones, MD. FACS

Shomaf Nakhjo, DO

sometimes it takes 10 minutes or less. In most cases, we can get definitive information in an incision that is 1 to 2 millimeters.

A: Dr. Nakhjo: You can perform the same surgeries you would do with an open (traditional) surgical procedure, but you make smaller incisions, about 5 to 10 millimeters. We use a port device — a cannula or tube placed into the incision and through the abdominal wall. The instruments we use to perform the surgery are placed through these cannulas.

Q: WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES?

A: Dr. Nakhjo: The recovery time for a patient is quicker. There's also less postoperative pain after minimally invasive surgery, which means less need for pain medication. There's less of a chance to develop pneumonia, blood clots in the legs or wound infections. Aesthetically, it looks better — the scarring is not as noticeable.

A: Dr. Jones: For most breast surgeries, if a patient does not need a mastectomy, we can do all the procedures as an outpatient. We do skin-sparing and nipple-sparing procedures. You can even remove the entire breast through a minimal incision. Such procedures can decrease complications and have faster healing.

Q: WHO'S A GOOD CANDIDATE?

A: Dr. Jones: It depends on the patient's particular health history. If a patient has advanced breast cancer and we're managing the cancer, you do not want to leave cancer cells in the area if an open surgery could reach more of them.

A: Dr. Nakhjo: There's always a chance of converting a laparoscopic surgery to an open procedure, especially with a patient who has a very severe active disease and may have had multiple prior surgeries. There can be dense adhesions or scarring. But in most cases, it's only a challenge we can work through. At Newton, we have the latest technology, the training and the experience to do the latest in minimally invasive surgical procedures.

Stay on Top of Your Medicines With My Medication Record

Now there's a handy way to keep tabs on all of your medications, dosages, supplements and drug allergies. *My Medication Record* is a wallet-sized resource to bring to doctors' appointments, show your pharmacist and use in case of emergency. Always carrying this list of what you're taking can prevent dangerous drug interactions and mistakes, says M. Veronica Daly, MD, MS, director of medical informatics for Atlantic Health System. "If you're in a car accident, the ER would want to know what medications you're taking," she says. You should list herbals and supplements that can have powerful effects on other drugs, she adds. The bottom line? Be proactive about your health. "Write down what you're taking, and how much, and mention to everyone who cares for you that you have that list in your wallet," says Dr. Daly. "It's about patient safety and empowerment."

To download My Medication Record, visit atlantichealth.org/mymedicationrecord.

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| List prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and herbal medicines. Bring this form to doctor's appointments, emergency department or hospital visits. If you have any complications with medications, immediately contact your doctor. | | | | |
| Date:/ Patient name: First Last | | | | |
| Pharmacy name: Phone: () | | | | |
| Primary doctor name: Phone: () | | | | |
| Medication name/dose: | Medication treats (condition): | Medication frequency: | | Notes/ questions: |
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