

What is a hysterectomy?

A hysterectomy is surgery to remove the uterus. Sometimes the ovaries and fallopian tubes also are removed at the same time.

How is a hysterectomy done?

There are several ways to do the surgery. The type of surgery you have depends on your medical condition and your overall health. Talk with your doctor about which surgery is right for you.

Abdominal hysterectomy or Laparoscopic hysterectomy

This is done through a large cut or small minimal access cuts, called incisions, that the doctor makes in the lower belly. Your doctor may do surgery this way if:

- You have a lot of scar tissue around your uterus.
 - Your uterus is very large.
 - You have cancer of the uterus or cervix.
- Your doctor needs to check the area around your uterus for problems.

Vaginal hysterectomy

This is done through the vagina. Your doctor may do surgery this way if:

- Your uterus is normal in size and can be removed easily.
- You do not have endometriosis, a condition that causes tissue that lines the uterus to grow in other parts of the body.
- You do not have cancer of the uterus or cervix.

Laparoscopically assisted vaginal hysterectomy

This is done through the vagina and one or more small incisions in the belly. The doctor will insert a lighted viewing instrument (laparoscope, or scope) and surgical tools through the incisions in the belly. The scope and surgical tools help free the uterus. Then it is removed through the vagina.

Laparoscopic supracervical hysterectomy

This is done through several small incisions in the belly. The doctor inserts a scope and surgical tools through the incisions in the belly. He or she removes the uterus in small pieces through the incisions in the belly. **The cervix is left in place.** This method is an option when cervical or endometrial cancer is not a concern.

In rare cases during a vaginal or laparoscopic hysterectomy, the doctor may find a problem that makes an abdominal hysterectomy a better choice. If this happens, the doctor will remove the uterus through an incision in the lower belly.

What can you expect after a hysterectomy?

Recovery from the surgery can take up to 6 weeks depending on which surgery you have. You will need help around the house while you recover. You will not be able to do any heavy lifting or strenuous activities for a few weeks. You will probably need to take off from work at least 1 to 2 weeks. It is normal to feel more tired than usual. This can last for up to 2 to 3 months after the surgery. You also may notice that your emotions go up and down more than usual for a while.

After a hysterectomy, you will no longer have periods. You will not be able to get pregnant. If there is a chance that you will want to have a baby in the future, talk to your doctor about other treatment options.

A hysterectomy should not lower your interest in sex after you have healed. In fact, some women enjoy sex more when they no longer have to worry about birth control or heavy bleeding. Some women have vaginal dryness after a hysterectomy that makes sex less comfortable. A vaginal lubricant, such as Astroglide or K-Y Jelly, can help.

You may need to take hormone pills after a hysterectomy if your ovaries are removed and you have not gone through menopause. Removing the ovaries before menopause causes a sudden drop in the hormone estrogen. This increases your risk of developing weak and brittle bones (osteoporosis). Although estrogen replacement therapy (ERT) reduces the risk of osteoporosis, it does slightly increase the risk of some other problems, such as breast cancer and stroke. Talk with your doctor about the risks and benefits of taking estrogen if you have your ovaries removed.