

Left Hemicolectomy

Understanding The Procedure

A left hemicolectomy is an operation to remove the left side of your colon. This procedure is typically performed for patients with colon cancer or certain non-cancerous conditions, such as Crohn's disease or diverticular disease. In most cases, the operation can be performed using a laparoscopic (keyhole) technique, which results in a faster recovery compared to open surgery.

What Does The Operation Involve?

Your surgeon may perform the procedure using either an open or laparoscopic approach. During the operation:

- The left side of your colon is removed, along with the associated blood vessels and lymph nodes
- The remaining colon is reconnected to the top of your rectum using sutures or special staples
- In most cases, a stoma (colostomy or ileostomy) is not required, but your surgeon will discuss this with you if there is a possibility that a stoma may be needed
- The operation typically takes around two and a half hours
- The removed section of the bowel is sent to the pathology department for examination, with results usually available within two weeks

What Are The Risks?

Like any major surgery, a left hemicolectomy carries some risks. Your heart, lungs, and overall health will be assessed before surgery to minimise complications. You will also be given compression stockings and small injections to prevent blood clots.

Possible Complications Include:

- **Bleeding** - This is rare, but a blood transfusion is available if needed

- **Wound infections** – These can occur in both open and keyhole surgery but are usually mild and treatable with antibiotics
- **Anastomotic leak** – The connection between your bowel may leak, leading to infection. Patients with Crohn’s disease or those taking steroids have a higher risk. If this happens, treatment may involve antibiotics, a drain, or further surgery, possibly requiring a stoma
- **Ileus (temporary bowel paralysis)** – The bowel may take time to start working again, causing bloating and vomiting. This is usually managed with intravenous fluids and a nasogastric tube if necessary
- **Bowel obstruction** – A blockage can occur due to scar tissue or adhesions, causing abdominal pain, bloating, and vomiting. Most cases resolve on their own, but some may require surgical intervention
- **Conversion to open surgery** – If keyhole surgery is not possible, your surgeon may need to make a larger incision to complete the procedure safely

What Happens After The Operation?

After your surgery, you will have:

- An intravenous drip for fluids, usually removed within 24 hours once you are drinking normally
- A urinary catheter to drain your bladder, which is normally removed after 24 hours
- Occasionally, a small abdominal drain may be placed and removed after a few days
- Pain relief, often through an epidural or patient-controlled analgesia, to keep you comfortable
- Encouragement to start eating and drinking as soon as you feel ready, usually on the same day
- Early mobilisation, as getting out of bed and moving around reduces complications and speeds up recovery

Recovery And Follow-Up

- Hospital stay is typically 2-5 days for keyhole surgery and 5-7 days for open surgery, though this varies between patients
- If external sutures or staples were used, they will be removed 10-14 days after surgery
- Once discharged, you should stay mobile but avoid heavy lifting or strenuous activities for around six weeks
- You can normally resume driving after about two weeks, but recovery may take longer if you had an open procedure
- Your diet should consist of small, regular meals, avoiding rich, spicy, or high-fibre foods for the first few weeks
- A follow-up consultation is usually arranged two weeks after surgery, but you can be seen sooner if necessary

Why Choose The Midlands Bowel Clinic?

- **Specialist expertise** – Our highly skilled colorectal surgeons have extensive experience in bowel surgery
- **Minimally invasive techniques** – We use laparoscopic (keyhole) surgery whenever possible to ensure faster recovery times
- **Patient-focused care** – Our team provides individualised treatment plans and comprehensive post-operative support
- **State-of-the-art facilities** – We operate in modern, well-equipped hospitals with the latest technology
- **High standards of safety** – Our procedures follow the latest guidelines from ACPGBI, NHS, and NICE

Contact Us

For more information or to book a consultation at Midlands Bowel Clinic, please get in touch. Our team is here to support you at every stage of your treatment and recovery.