



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Gallbladder Disease

Gallbladder disease comes in several forms, and while it can typically be painful, understanding the condition is the first step to taking control of its symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Bile	Dark yellow fluid stored in the gallbladder that helps digest fatty foods. Bile is sometimes referred to as gall.
Gallstones	Crystals that form inside the gallbladder when there is too much cholesterol or bilirubin. They are a symptom of gallbladder disease.
Cholecystitis	Inflammation of the gallbladder, which may be caused by gallstones (acute cholecystitis) but can also occur in people who don't have stones (acalculous cholecystitis).
Choledocholithiasis	Obstruction of the main bile duct.
Sphincter of Oddi	A valve that regulates the flow of bile and digestive juices as they travel from the liver and pancreas to the small intestine.
Biliary Dyskinesia	Caused by abnormal function of the sphincter of Oddi in which the fluid backs up in the ducts. This can be intensely painful.
Hepatobiliary Iminodiacetic Acid (HIDA) Scan	A test of gallbladder function that allows a technician to see how the bile moves from the gallbladder and through the duct system. This is accomplished by using a radioactive tracer.
Cholecystectomy	Surgical removal of the gallbladder. It's the primary treatment for most gallbladder disease.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage gallbladder disease.

About Symptoms

- What diagnosis do my symptoms suggest?
- Are these symptoms typical of gallbladder disease?
- Will my symptoms get worse?
- What symptoms may develop that are cause for concern?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Why do I have gallbladder disease?
- Are my family members likely to get this?

About Diagnosis

- What tests will I need?
- Are they invasive?
- How long will it take to get results?

About Treatment

- How can I deal with the pain?
- Can drugs help?
- Will I need surgery?
- What does the surgery entail?
- How long is the recovery time?
- What are possible complications of surgery?

About Coping

- Can my eating habits help reduce gallbladder pain?
- Will I need to change my diet after surgery?
- Should I see a nutritionist to help with dietary changes?
