

on the *button*



a new surgical option
offered at GMC makes
gallbladder removal
less invasive, so you
can recover faster

belly button. Cholecystectomies are one of the most common surgical procedures, and this new innovation makes them far more appealing to potential patients.

Single incision procedures through the belly button and other natural orifices are growing in popularity and are a significant step toward incisionless surgery. “Single-incision laparoscopic procedures are a significant advancement and will soon become the standard for minimally invasive procedures like hernia repair and weight-loss surgery,” says James Elsey, M.D., a vascular surgeon at GMC, president of the Georgia chapter of the American College of Surgeons and one of the first surgeons to perform the procedure in Georgia.

Individuals who are 40 and older, fair, fat, fertile and female—a list referred to as the “five F’s”—most often experience painful gallstones forming in the gallbladder. The American College of Gastroenterology notes that patients with gallstones experience pain in the right upper region of the abdomen and/or pain in the right shoulder or chest.

After you’re born, belly buttons don’t seem to serve much of a purpose. But a new surgery offered at Gwinnett Medical Center may change your view of them.

GMC recently expanded its minimally invasive surgical program to include a procedure—single-incision laparoscopic cholecystectomy—that removes gallbladders through an incision in the



From left to right, Yaima Ciscernos, ST; Dr. John Chrysoschoos, a visiting surgeon from Spalding Regional Medical Center learning the SILS technique; Dr. James Elsey; and Rachael Click, MS3-PCOM medical student.

Bile in the gallbladder concentrates with increased ingestion of fatty foods. Gallstones form and harden from increased cholesterol and bile salts, and those stones block the bile flow from the gallbladder, resulting in a gallbladder attack. When an attack lasts longer than a couple of hours or is associated with fever, you should see a doctor immediately.

Gallbladder disease is treated by removing the patient's gallbladder. The single-incision option of the procedure now available at Gwinnett Medical Center results in reduced scarring, fewer incisions, less pain and faster recovery time.

"Three to four abdominal incisions are required for a standard laparoscopic cholecystectomy," says Dr. Elsey. "This single-incision surgery offers tremendous benefit by reducing scarring and infection. I believe it will soon become the standard for gallbladder removal." 

gallbladder disease: what is it?

Gallbladder disease includes gallbladder inflammation, infection, gallstones and gallbladder obstruction. It's the most common disease in the U.S., resulting in more than 800,000 hospitalizations annually; 20 million Americans have been diagnosed with gallstones and there are 1 million newly diagnosed cases every year.

Common symptoms of gallbladder disease include painful attacks after a fatty meal; severe pain or aching in the upper abdomen, back or right shoulder blade; a dull ache beneath the ribs or breastbone; nausea; upset stomach or vomiting; jaundice; and dark urine.

Lab tests, ultrasound and a gallbladder scan are tests used for diagnosis of the disease. Treatment includes pain medication if stones are present with no infection or inflammation. However, surgery is the primary method of treatment, including the single-incision surgery highlighted in this article.