

PATIENT INFORMATION · PROCEDURE 01

Laparoscopic Surgery

Minimally invasive keyhole surgery — smaller incisions, faster recovery.

Laparoscopic — or keyhole — surgery replaces a single large incision with several very small ones. Working through a camera and specialised instruments, we achieve the same clinical result with dramatically less trauma to the body.

What it involves

Dr Marais performs a full range of laparoscopic procedures: gallbladder removal, hernia repair, appendectomy, anti-reflux (Nissen fundoplication), adrenal and colorectal surgery, and bariatric procedures. His advanced training includes fellowships at IRCAD in France and Belgium — two of the world's leading centres for minimally invasive surgery.

During a laparoscopic operation, three to five small cuts (usually 5–10 mm) are made in the abdominal wall. Carbon dioxide gas gently inflates the abdomen to create a working space, a slim high-definition camera is passed through one port, and long thin instruments through the others. The surgery is performed while watching the operative field on a screen at magnifications that exceed what open surgery offers.

The clinical benefits are consistent across the literature: less post-operative pain, smaller wounds, lower wound-infection rates, quicker return of bowel function, shorter hospital stay, and a return to work in days rather than weeks. Cosmetically, the incisions heal to short lines that fade over months.

Not every operation is a candidate for a laparoscopic approach — extensive prior surgery, hostile adhesions, or advanced disease sometimes make an open approach safer. Dr Marais is trained in both and will convert if the safest path forward changes during surgery.

When it's indicated

For most abdominal and endocrine procedures, keyhole surgery is now the standard of care. Whether it is right for you depends on your anatomy, prior surgical history, and the specific condition being treated. That conversation happens at your consultation.

The approach

Every patient gets a clear, plain-language explanation of what the surgery involves, what recovery looks like, and what the realistic risks are — before you decide.

Recovery

Most laparoscopic operations at Johannesburg Surgical Hospital are same-day or one-night stays. You'll typically walk within hours of waking, eat a light meal that evening, and be discharged the next

morning. Return to desk work is usually within a week; heavy lifting and gym work at three to four weeks depending on the procedure.

Common questions

Is laparoscopic surgery safer than open surgery?

For most abdominal operations, laparoscopic surgery has lower rates of wound infection, less bleeding, and faster recovery. It's not automatically safer for every case — some conditions require open surgery. The decision is made per patient.

How much does laparoscopic surgery cost in Johannesburg?

Most South African medical aids cover laparoscopic surgery for approved indications. The practice supplies a written quote before booking so you know exactly what's covered and what you'll pay in.

Will I have visible scars?

The incisions are 5–10 mm and heal to fine short lines. Most patients find them barely visible within a year, especially around the belly button where one port is hidden.

How long is the hospital stay?

Most laparoscopic procedures require one night in hospital. Simple procedures like laparoscopic hernia repair or gallbladder removal are frequently discharged the same day.

Can any surgery be done laparoscopically?

No. Very advanced cancers, extensive adhesions from prior surgery, or emergencies with instability sometimes make open surgery safer. Dr Marais assesses this in consultation and is trained in both approaches.

This brochure is general information about a surgical procedure and does not replace a consultation. Every patient's circumstances are different — please discuss your specific case with Dr Marais before deciding on treatment.