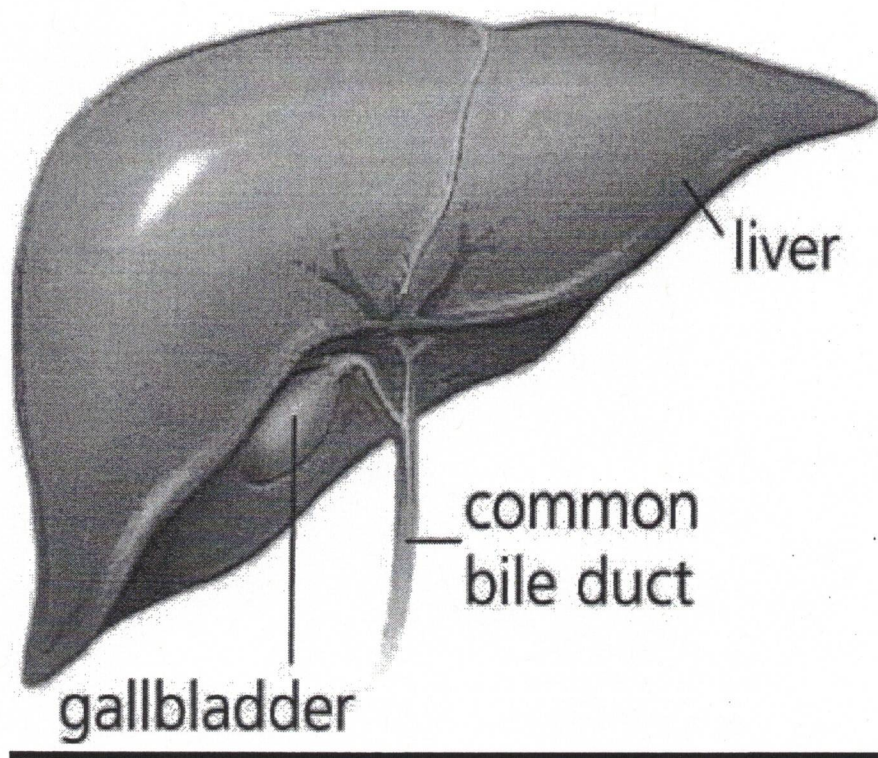


UNDERSTANDING THE
GALLBLADDER



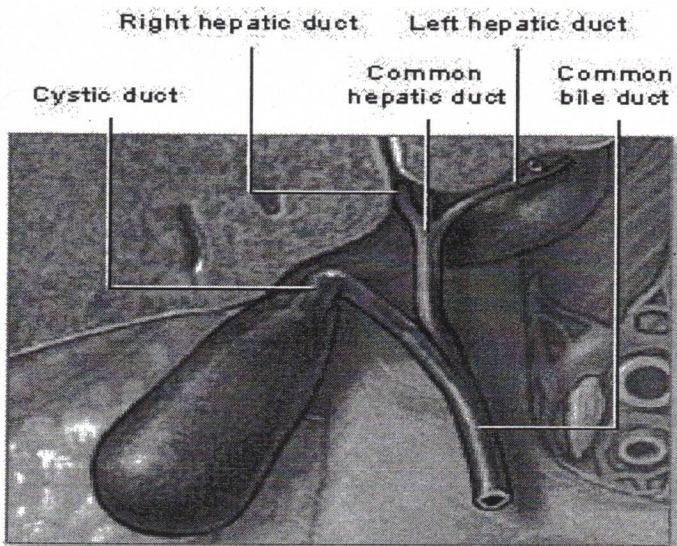
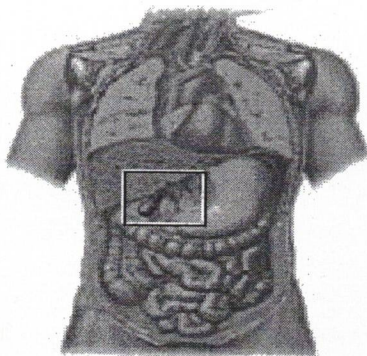
GALLBLADDER DISEASE

The gallbladder is a sac located under the liver. It stores and concentrates bile produced in the liver. Bile aids in the digestion of fats, and is released from the gallbladder into the upper small intestine in response to food, especially fats.

Types of gallbladder disease include:

- **Cholecystitis** (inflammation of the gallbladder)
- **Cholelithiasis** (gallstones)
- **Gangrene or Abscesses** (acute infections)

You can have gallstones without any symptoms. However, if the stones are large, they can block the duct that leads from the gallbladder. This can cause pain and require treatment. At first they may block the duct and move away, causing only occasional pain. Continuous blockage of the duct, however, can be life threatening and requires surgical removal of the gallbladder.



SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Pain in the upper right side of abdomen but can radiate to the back –it can come and go or be constant
- Pain following meals, intolerance of fatty foods
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Bloating feeling in the chest and stomach area

DIAGNOISING GALLBLADDER DISEASE

If your doctor suspects you have gallstones, you'll be scheduled for an **ultrasound scan**. If no stones are seen you will then be set up for a **Hepatobiliary Scan (HIDA)**. This scan uses a radioactive fluid to check the function of the gallbladder.

CAUSES OF GALLBLADDER DISEASE

Inflammation causes a gallbladder attack. This usually happens because a stone is blocking a passageway in the gallbladder. Gallstones develop in the gallbladder when substances in bile form hard particles. They can be as small as a grain of sand or as large as a golf ball. Women are at higher risk of developing gallstones than men. Being overweight and rapid weight loss followed by weight gain are other risk factors for gallstones.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Gallbladders that cause pain are usually removed. There are no known problems caused by living without a gallbladder. Today, most gallbladder surgeries are performed with a laparoscope. The minimally invasive procedure allows for a smaller incision and quicker recovery.

- **Laparoscopic Surgery:** During this type of procedure, your doctor will make a few small incisions in your abdomen. The laparoscope is then inserted through one of the incisions. Using video images from the scope, other surgical instruments are carefully guided to the gallbladder. Once the gallbladder is removed, the incisions are closed with sutures or strips of surgical tape.
- **Open Surgery:** Your doctor may decide to switch from a laparoscopic to an open procedure. This does NOT mean something has gone wrong. Instead, it is done when your doctor feels it is safer to remove the gallbladder through a larger incision. The difference between open and laparoscopic is you will have a larger incision in your abdomen with a longer recovery time.

