

Robots take on gynecological surgery

With advanced technology like the da Vinci robot, women requiring gynecological surgery can be up and about less than 48 hours after major surgery. And that's just one of the advantages of robotic surgery that's being used by Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital's obstetrics and gynecology physicians.

This robotic surgery is used for benign gynecological problems such as hysterectomies and the removal of fallopian tubes, ovaries and fibroids, says Richard Smith, M.D., and Heather Herbolzheimer, D.O., obstetric and gynecological surgeons at Good Shepherd Hospital. With traditional hysterectomies, patients are typically in bed for three days and need four to six weeks to recover. Robotic surgery reduces bed rest to about 48 hours and time off from work to one or two weeks.

The only problem with speedy recoveries, says Dr. Smith, is that he has to regularly caution women to slow down because they could injure themselves if they do too much too soon.

What to expect

Robotic surgery is minimally invasive so it uses much smaller incisions. When performing a robot-assisted hysterectomy, for example, four small incisions are made: one at less than one-half inch (12 mm) and three at one-third inch (8 mm). With traditional surgery, the incision is usually about 6 inches to 8 inches (150 mm to 200 mm) long. The smaller incisions with the robot decrease the chance of infection and blood loss and significantly reduce pain following surgery, Dr. Smith points out. Patients also appreciate that they're left with smaller scars.

Robotic surgery can increase the actual procedure time compared

to traditional open procedures, but the significantly reduced recovery time and decreased pain are well worth it.

Robotic surgery isn't for everyone, however. Women with pulmonary problems such as asthma or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease can't undergo robotic surgery because they are tilted head-down during this surgery, making it difficult to ventilate them. Very obese women also aren't candidates, says Dr. Smith. "But most women choose robotic surgery if they're a candidate. I haven't done any hysterectomies in the last three months that weren't robotic," he says.

What's ahead?

Robotic surgery is the wave of the future, Dr. Smith predicts. Next up for the surgical robots? "Vaginal vault prolapse," says Dr. Smith. He expects to be performing these surgeries within the next year. Good Shepherd Hospital is proud that its physicians are eager to learn and use the latest technology available, which offers greater benefits to our patients.



➤ Are you considering surgery? Know your options.

To learn more about robot-assisted gynecological surgeries and other da Vinci procedures available at Good Shepherd Hospital, visit www.advocatehealth.com/goodshep/davinci.