MAJOR GYNAECOLOGICAL OPERATIONS - List of Complications

High Risk Complications (1 in 100 or higher)

- **Bleeding** - may occur early or late. If excessive this will require blood transfusion. Sometimes a further anaesthetic and operation may be necessary to stop the bleeding. Bleeding can cause collections of blood (haematomas) in the pelvis and can become infected.

- **Bladder and kidney problems** - you may have problems emptying the bladder (retention), bladder infections, incontinence, damage to bladder and ureters (kidney tubes) which can also cause leakage of urine (fistula formation).

- **Adhesions** - laparotomies can cause adhesions (stickiness) which in turn can lead to bowel obstruction, colic etc. A further operation may be required to correct this.

- **Peritonitis** - laparotomies can lead to peritonitis (infection in the abdomen) which can make you seriously ill.

- **Wound complications** - these include infection, abscess formation, wound breakdown, formation of excessive scar tissue, formation of unsightly scars, pain around the scars, discolouration and hernia formation. Patients who are overweight (raised BMI) and those who have had previous operations are more at risk.

- **Thrombosis (blood clots)** - clots can form in the legs or thigh or pelvis. These can spread to the lungs which can be life threatening. Obese patients, cancer patients, smokers and elderly patients are at increased risk.

- **Thrombophlebitis** - inflammation of veins can occur. This is a painful condition.

- **Vaginal discharge and bleeding** - this occurs in about 10% of patients and the bleeding can persist for 2-3 weeks.

- **Recurrence of endometriosis** - this condition can recur because it is impossible to remove endometriosis totally.

- **Recurrence of adhesions (scar / tissue)** - operations are sometimes performed to try and reduce pain due to adhesions. These operations can sometimes lead to more scar tissue being formed, thereby causing more problems in the long term.

- **Pelvic Pain** - when a hysterectomy is performed for pelvic pain it may provide only temporary relief for this condition. The pain can sometimes recur or become worse.

- **Early Menopause** - This can happen if ovaries are removed before the menopause.

Low Risk Complications (1 in 1,000 to 1 in 10000)

- **Risks of death** - the risk of death is about 1:2000 - 1:3000. A hysterectomy should only be undertaken if absolutely necessary. The risk is increased in the conditions listed below.

- **Significant risk reduction can be achieved by:**
  - Getting fit, taking Iron for anaemia
  - Reducing or stopping smoking
  - Losing weight before the operation
  - Stabilising any medical condition you may have
The risk of having complications is increased significantly in the following:

- Smokers
- Obese patients
- Patients with chronic heart & lung problems, blood pressure, diabetes etc.
- Previous abdominal or vaginal operations including Caesarean section.
- Older patients
- Serious conditions like endometriosis, cancer or recurrent cancer.
- Patients on multiple medications
- Patients on anti-coagulants (eg Warfarin) to thin the blood
- Major operations involving more than one consultant
- Repeated operations

ANAESTHETIC COMPLICATIONS

Common side effects and complications (less than 1 in 100)

- Feeling sick and vomiting after surgery
- Sore throat
- Dizziness, blurred vision
- Shivering
- Headache
- Itching
- Aches, pains and backache
- Pain during injection of drugs
- Bruising and soreness
- Confusion or memory loss

Uncommon side effects and complications (less than 1 in 1000)

- Chest infection
- Bladder problems
- Muscle pains
- Slow breathing (depressed respiration)
- Damage to teeth, lips or tongue
- Awareness

Rare or very rare complications (1 in 10,000 to 1 in 200,000)

- Damage to the eyes
- Serious allergy to drugs eg. Malignant hyperthermia
- Nerve damage
- Death – 5 deaths occur for every million anaesthetics given
- Equipment failure

Please note that other rare complications not listed above can occur.

Copy given to patient:  Yes ☐ No ☐ Date:................Signature:..........................

It is important for patients to understand risks in order to compare them with potential benefits of any operation or procedure. Medicine deals with uncertainty all the time and patients may find this concept difficult to accept.