Laparoscopic surgery, sometimes referred to as “keyhole” or minimally invasive surgery, is one of the fastest-growing areas of surgical medicine today. Instead of making a single large incision, the surgeon uses several very small incisions to insert long, narrow surgical instruments into the body. One of them, called a laparoscope, has lenses to magnify body structures, a powerful light to illuminate them, and a miniature video camera that sends images to a TV monitor in the operating room, which gives the surgeon a view inside the body.

At Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers, surgeons use laparoscopy to perform a wide variety of procedures, including gall-bladder removal, hernia repair, appendectomy, hysterectomy, colon surgery, kidney and spleen removal, tubal ligation and more.

“Laparoscopy has revolutionized surgery in many ways,” explains Kristopher Oswalt, M.D., board-certified general surgeon and chief of surgery at Morris Hospital. “A lot of what was once done as open surgery is now done using laparoscopy.”

In fact, removal of the gallbladder with laparoscopy is one of the most common surgeries in the United States. Nearly 800,000 people undergo laparoscopic gallbladder removal each year.

“Laparoscopy is easier on the patient because it uses a few, very small incisions,” he adds.

For example, traditional “open surgery” on the abdomen typically requires a four- to five-inch incision through skin and muscle. In laparoscopic surgery, the doctor makes two to three incisions that are about a half-inch long.

Smaller incisions are less damaging to body tissue, organs and muscles so patients recover sooner. In fact, most are able to return home after a few hours or within a day or two – and return to work and their normal routine within three to five days. In contrast, traditional open surgery may require limited activities for weeks.
Other benefits of laparoscopy include less pain after surgery, fewer complications and less scarring. During laparoscopic surgery, typically one incision can be hidden in the belly button area, and others are placed low in the abdomen, where scars are easily covered by a bikini or undergarments.

To perform laparoscopic surgery, surgeons undergo additional training to learn to use the highly advanced equipment.

“Just like in our personal lives, technology in the medical field is continually evolving,” Dr. Oswalt adds. “New instruments and devices are constantly being introduced that make medical procedures even better for the patient.”

When laparoscopy was first introduced in the 1990s, it was limited to select patients. Some were unable to undergo laparoscopic procedures because of large body size. Today, unless there is a lot of abdominal scarring from past surgeries, most patients are candidates.

For more information about laparoscopic or minimally invasive surgery at Morris Hospital & Healthcare Centers, call 815-942-2932, ext. 1100.

Busy Working Mom Praises Laparoscopic Hysterectomy

As a working mother of five, Stephanie Hauch doesn’t have a minute to spare. So when abnormally heavy menstrual bleeding and accompanying fatigue began to take a toll on her energy and active lifestyle a couple years ago, she had a problem.

Initially, Stephanie tried conservative measures. When those didn’t work, she was faced with hysterectomy, or surgical removal of the uterus.

Surgery and recovery are often daunting prospects, and for someone with Stephanie’s busy schedule, they’re even more so. She was pleased to learn she was a candidate for laparoscopic-assisted vaginal hysterectomy (LAVH).

Instead of making a large incision, surgeons performing LAVH insert a laparoscope and other surgical instruments into the body through small incisions. The uterus is then removed through the vagina. Without a large incision, post-operative pain is minimal and recovery is much quicker.

“The majority of hysterectomies done at Morris Hospital today are done laparoscopically,” Stephanie explains. And she would know; she’s a Morris Hospital surgical nurse.

Following a brief hospital stay, Stephanie says she was “feeling really good” within a week (compared to four to six weeks with traditional hysterectomy).

“For women faced with a hysterectomy, I highly recommend the laparoscopic technique,” she says. “Several of my friends have had LAVHs, and they’re very happy with it too.”

Morris Hospital offers many advanced laparoscopic surgical procedures, including:

**Laparoscopic gynecological procedures** – hysterectomy, bladder repair, ovary removal, removal of tumor on uterine wall, ectopic pregnancy, tubal ligation

**Laparoscopic general surgery procedures** – gallbladder removal, hernia repair, spleen repair or removal, diagnostic laparoscopy, colon resection, appendectomy (adult and children)

**Laparoscopic orthopedic surgery procedures** – arthroscopic procedures of the hip or knee

**Laparoscopic urology procedures** – kidney removal, adrenal gland removal