Typically surgery to remove the bile duct is most frequently caused by obstruction of the common bile duct or liver disease. Biliary pain, known as a gallbladder attack or gallstone attack, is when pain occurs due to the presence of gallstones and gallbladder polyps. Treatment for gallbladder attacks is often successful with medical therapy and is not always necessary. However, if gallstones and gallbladder polyps are present, surgery may be necessary. Surgery to remove the gallbladder is called a cholecystectomy.

Surgery for biliary tract disease is performed to: remove the diseased gallbladder, remove the common bile duct, and explore the biliary tract to remove any stones. The practice of performing cholecystectomy has changed over time. In the past, cholecystectomy was often performed to treat stones in the common bile duct. Today, cholecystectomy is often performed for non-stone-related conditions, such as gallbladder disease, inflammation, and infection.

Medical therapy for biliary tract disease includes medications, dietary changes, and lifestyle modifications. Medications may be used to reduce symptoms, prevent complications, and treat underlying conditions. Dietary changes and lifestyle modifications may include avoiding certain foods, maintaining a healthy weight, and engaging in regular physical activity.

Current practice in biliary surgery involves a combination of surgical and medical treatments. Surgery may be necessary to remove the diseased gallbladder, remove the common bile duct, and explore the biliary tract to remove any stones. Medical therapy may be used to reduce symptoms, prevent complications, and treat underlying conditions.

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