



***PATIENT  
INFORMATION***

## Open Nephrectomy

## **What is a Nephrectomy?**

It is an operation to remove a kidney. It is sometimes necessary to remove the adjoining adrenal gland and surrounding tissue.

This is known as a radical nephrectomy. The operation can be performed as a keyhole procedure, called a Laparoscopic Nephrectomy, or an open operation. Your surgeon will be able to explain to you why a particular route is recommended for you.

This leaflet refers to the operation of open nephrectomy, which is through a single larger incision.

## **Why is it necessary**

It may be necessary to treat cancer of the kidney. It can also be done to remove a kidney that is no longer working due to chronic infection or obstruction.

## **What does the kidney do?**

The two kidneys filter the blood. They take out waste products and balance fluids, producing urine as a result. They also help to keep blood pressure within normal limits.

## **Can you live with only one kidney?**

Yes. However, it is important to continue with any recommended checks, for example X-rays for stones or blood pressure measurements

## **When may I resume sexual relations?**

You may resume as soon as you feel comfortable. This is often several weeks after the operation.


## **When will I see the doctor again?**

You will receive an appointment to be seen in the outpatient Clinic usually between 12 and 16 weeks after your operation.

**Please phone the ward if you have concerns about your recovery and this appointment**

**For further information please contact:**

**Urology Department  
Level 2  
Torbay Hospital  
Lawes Bridge  
Torquay TQ2 7AA**

** Tel: (01803) 654806**

### **What medication will I take home?**

We will arrange a supply of pain killers and any other regular medication to take home with you.

### **When can I return to work?**

You can usually return to work after about four-six weeks. This is dependent on the type of work you do. Those involved in heavy manual work should remain off work for longer. Please check with a member of staff before you go home.

### **What about exercise**

It is good to do general exercise after a few days at home, but avoid more strenuous exercise for several weeks.

### **What happens to the wound?**

The wound is quite a large incision and you may need to have a dressing over it for several days. The stitch will usually be removed ten days after the operation. The Practice Nurse at your GP Surgery or a District Nurse will do this for you.

### **Can I have a bath?**

Yes. Taking a bath or shower is fine. However, avoid perfumed soaps and talc until the stitch is removed and the wound is well healed.

### **When can I drive?**

You may drive after a few weeks provided that you feel able to perform an emergency stop without difficulty. You will also need to check with your own insurance company to ensure you are covered to recommence driving.

## **About your operation**

### **Risks**

This is a major operation and carries risks of chest infection or heart problems related to the anaesthetic. There is a risk of infection in the operation wound. There are risks of blood clots forming in the legs or lung despite preventative measures. The operation carries some risk of major bleeding, though the risk of needing transfusion is usually less than 20%.

Damage can occur to neighbouring bowel or large vessels but the incidence of major complication is less than 2%. In cases of cancer, a cure cannot be guaranteed. As this is a major operation, there is a small risk of death, but this is generally well less than 1 in 100.

### **Benefits**

Relief of symptoms or control of cancer

### **Before the operation**

Patients are admitted to hospital the day of or the day before their operation. You will stay in hospital for about 5 – 7 days.

The anaesthetist will see you and discuss the anaesthetic and type of pain relief necessary. You may be prescribed a 'pre-med' i.e. medication to help you relax before your surgery.

Your nurse will tell you when you must stop eating and drinking. About an hour before going to theatre you will be asked to put on a theatre gown. You may also be asked to wear a pair of tight fitting stockings. These are designed to decrease the risk of blood clots. You will be taken to theatre on your bed and accompanied by a ward staff member.

## **During the op**

Once you are anaesthetised and pain-free the surgeon will make an incision on the appropriate side, through which the kidney is removed. A plastic tube called a wound drain will be placed near the incision to collect any excess fluid from the wound area. A catheter tube will be placed into the bladder in order to measure the amount of urine being produced by the remaining kidney.

A fine tube may be placed from your nose to your stomach during the operation. This prevents you from feeling sick.

The operation usually takes about 2 – 3 hours.

## **After the operation**

Immediately after the operation you will be transferred to the Recovery Ward where you will stay until you are fully awake and comfortable. You will be given some oxygen through a mask; this will usually stay in place until the following day. You will have a drip giving you fluid while you are not drinking. This drip may be placed in your arm or at the side of your neck.

## **Will I be in pain?**

The amount of pain experienced after surgery varies with each individual. You will probably have some pain in your side but there are several ways of controlling this. Initially you will receive your pain relief either through an epidural or through a pump that you can control yourself (Patient Controlled Analgesia).

These methods are usually discontinued after two to three days; thereafter the nurses will provide you with regular injections or tablets of painkiller.

## **When can I eat and drink**

You will not be allowed to eat or drink straight away. This is because your gut can become sluggish after surgery, even though your surgery has not been directly on the gut. You will be allowed to start gradually drinking and then eating as your gut returns to normal activity. This can take a few days.

## **What about the tubes?**

The tube from your nose to your stomach will come out a day or two after your surgery provided that you are not feeling sick.

The wound drain usually comes out after 2-3 days.

The catheter in the bladder will usually be removed after about 3 days.

## **Getting out of bed**

You will be encouraged to get up and about as soon as possible. This is to prevent complications such as a chest infection, pressure sores or a deep vein thrombosis (a clot in the leg veins). You will be taught to do deep breathing and leg exercises, and a physiotherapist will see you the day after your surgery.

## **Going home**

Allow yourself plenty of rest and try to make plans for going home before your admission to hospital. You should be able to look after yourself but it is ideal if you have somebody with you for the first few days.