

# **Nephrectomy surgery laparoscopic and open methods**

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## **What is a nephrectomy?**

A nephrectomy is surgery to remove all or part of your kidney. The adrenal gland may also be removed at the same time. Surgery can be done in 2 ways: laparoscopic or open method.

### **Laparoscopic method**

You are put to sleep with a general anesthetic. This surgery is done using several small incisions (cuts) in your abdomen. The kidney is taken out through a larger incision above your pubic bone or near the belly button. The surgery takes about 2 to 4 hours.

Plan to be in the hospital about 3 to 5 days.

### **Open method**

You are put to sleep with a general anesthetic. During surgery, the surgeon makes a long incision along your side or across your abdomen. The surgery takes about 1 to 4 hours. The incision is closed with staples. The surgery takes about 1 to 4 hours.

Plan to be in the hospital about 3 to 5 days.

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## Preparing before surgery

Keep up with your regular activities and exercise. You want to be as strong as you can before you have the surgery.

Arrange for someone to help you around the house, and do errands for you when you come home after surgery.

Follow the pre-op checklist and medication instructions that were given to you during your pre-op visit.

Your belly button needs to be cleaned before your surgery. Wash it with soap and warm water the night before your surgery. It is very important to clean the inside of your belly button as well.

## After surgery

Along with your intravenous (IV), you may have:

- An epidural catheter for giving pain medicine through a thin tube into a small space in your lower back.
- Patient Controlled Analgesia (PCA). You give yourself pain medication in your IV through a PCA pump.
- A tube called a catheter in your bladder to drain urine during and after surgery.
- Tubes or drains near your incision area to drain extra fluid that can build up after surgery.
- To wear special pressure stockings, (TED stockings) or boots (moon boots). These stockings and boots keep blood moving and help prevent blood clots.

## Pain

You will have pain and discomfort after surgery, especially around the incisions. Pain medicine will be given to you on a regular basis to keep you comfortable and your pain under control.

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**Pain medications can be given in different ways:**

- PCA pump or epidural catheter
- In your IV
- By needle under the skin
- Pills – when you are able to drink fluids

Most pain medication can make you constipated. Stool softeners are often given to prevent this problem. You may also feel sick to your stomach. Medication can be taken to decrease this feeling.

Pain is often caused by the gas left in the abdomen after laparoscopic surgery. This pain is often felt in the shoulder. Walking and moving around helps to lessen this pain and discomfort.

You will be given a prescription for pain before you leave the hospital. Your pain should lessen each day.

**Incision care**

Follow the instructions from your surgeon and nurse about when you can shower. Do not take a bath until your incisions are healed.

Each incision should be a dry closed line. Your incisions may be covered with tape. Try to keep the tape clean and dry. If the tape falls off, you can leave it off. If you have stitches they will usually dissolve on their own in a few weeks. Sometimes, the surgeon uses stitches that do not dissolve on their own. Please check with your nurse if you need to have your stitches removed.

If you have clips or staples in the incision they will be taken out at your follow up visit with the surgeon.

**Eating and drinking**

You will slowly begin to drink clear fluids and eat. You will have an IV until you are ready to take fluids by mouth. It may be a few days before you start to pass gas and/or have a bowel movement.

## Activity

While in the hospital you will feel tired and unwell. While rest is important, getting up and walking can help most patients feel better and recover faster. Walking and increasing your activities helps to keep your lungs healthy and prevent blood clots.

We encourage you to be as active as possible while in the hospital such as sitting up in a chair during meals and while visiting, walking in your room and down the hallways. You will be encouraged to do deep breathing, coughing and leg exercises after surgery.

Gradually resume your normal activities. Avoid contact sports. Do not do any heavy lifting or strenuous exercises like shoveling snow, raking leaves, vacuuming or mowing the lawn until you talk with your surgeon.

## Going home

Your nurse will review with you what you need to know about how to care for yourself at home. Please ask us to repeat information you do not understand or clarify what you need to do. You will need to arrange for transportation home.

## Follow up

If you were not given a follow up appointment when you left the hospital, call your surgeon's office for an appointment.

## Call your surgeon if you have:

- pain or difficulty in passing urine
- increased swelling, redness or discharge from any incision
- fever of 38°C (100°F) or greater
- pain that does not get better
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhea that does not go away in 2 days
- any questions or concerns that you feel may be related to surgery