Nephrectomy or Partial Nephrectomy

Your Care after Surgery

Here is information to help you care for yourself after your surgery. Your doctor may give you other instructions based on your needs and situation.

Abdominal Swelling, Constipation or Bloating

- Wear comfortable loose fitting clothes after surgery. Wear pants with a relaxed elastic waist and shoes you can slip on easily.
- It is common to have constipation after surgery. It may take 4 to 5 days to have a bowel movement. Take your stool softener as directed. If passing stool is difficult, try taking Milk of Magnesia as directed on the package. You may also try over-the-counter Dulcolax suppositories. Bowel movements should be soft with no straining.
- Hemorrhoids are common after surgery. Try using over-the-counter hemorrhoid products and baby wipes to help with discomfort. Keep paper flat when wiping. If this does not help, call your doctor.

Weight Gain

- You may have a short term weight gain due to fluid changes during surgery and gas. Your weight should go back to normal in about 7 to 14 days after surgery.

Bruising Around the Incision Area

- It is normal to have bruising at the incision site. This will go away over time.
- You may have a small amount of clear to light bloody drainage from the incision site. Call your doctor if the drainage has an odor or changes color.

This handout is for informational purposes only. Talk with your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.
Going Home with a Urinary Catheter

- If you go home with a urinary catheter (Foley) in place, you may notice that after activity or a bowel movement you have bloody drainage around the catheter or in your urine. This drainage should lessen after rest and drinking more fluids. **Call your doctor if you have any of the following:**
  - Clots in your urine
  - No urine output for 3 to 4 hours
  - An increase in pain
  - Your catheter is not draining urine

Bladder Spasms

- Bladder spasms are common with or without a urinary catheter in place. You may feel mild to severe bladder pain, cramping, an urgent need to urinate, or burning when you urinate. If these symptoms do not go away, call your doctor.

Lower Leg, Ankle or Foot Swelling

- After surgery, you may have swelling in your legs, ankles or feet. To help reduce the swelling, raise your legs above your heart when sitting or lying down. **Call your doctor right away if:**
  - You have pain in your lower legs (calves)
  - You have shortness of breath or chest pain
  - You have blisters or if fluid leaks from the swollen area
  - One leg becomes larger or more painful than the other leg

Eating After Surgery

- Drink plenty of water throughout the day (about 2 liters of water each day)
- Eat small meals throughout the day
- Try to eat high fiber foods
- Do not drink carbonated drinks or eat foods that cause gas (beans and broccoli)
- Limit foods that can cause constipation such as pastas, milk and dairy products
**Activity After Surgery**
Here are general guidelines for activity after your surgery. Your doctor may give you other instructions based on your needs and situation.

- Walk around throughout the day. This will help with your recovery and healing. You can do as much walking or stair climbing as you can tolerate. Start slowly and gradually increase your activity to the activity level you had before surgery.
- Do not sit in one position for more than 45 minutes.
- You will need to wait 6 weeks before jogging or running. Build up these activities gradually and do not strain yourself.
- Do not ride a bike, motorcycle, use yard and garden equipment, or horseback ride for 6 weeks.
- Do not lift more than 3 pounds during the first week after surgery.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 6 weeks.
- You may shower after surgery. You do not need to cover your surgical incisions when you shower. Gently wash the area with soap and water and pat dry.
- No tub baths, swimming pools or hot tubs for 4 weeks after surgery.
- Do not drive until 2 weeks after your surgery.
- Most people are able to return to work about 2 to 4 weeks after surgery. Your doctor will talk with you about when to return to work based on the type of work you do.

**Medicines After Surgery**

- You may restart your daily medicines after you leave the hospital. **Talk to your surgeon about when it is okay to restart Aspirin or any blood thinning medicines such as Coumadin.**
- You will be given prescription medicine for pain when you leave the hospital. You may need to take this medicine for a few days at home to help with pain.
- Continue to take a stool softener after surgery. Some pain medicines can cause constipation.
Follow-up Appointments

- You will see the doctor or the nurse practitioner at your follow-up appointments.
- You may need to have blood tests and other testing done before your appointment. If testing is done at your local hospital, bring a copy of all test results with you for your appointment.

When will I know the results of my surgery?

- It may take several weeks to get your pathology report back. Your doctor will review the results with you at your follow up appointment after surgery.

Returning to Work

- If your job does not require strenuous activity, you can try to go back to work in 2 to 4 weeks. You can restart most activities by 4 weeks, but if your job requires heavy lifting or strenuous activity, you may need to wait 6 weeks.

FMLA Papers or Return to Work Letters

- You will need to contact your doctor’s office for information about how to request assistance to complete this paperwork.

Call Your Doctor Right Away If You Have

- Temperature over 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius)
- Sudden change in lower back pain or abdominal pain that is not helped by taking your pain medicine
- Problems with vomiting, diarrhea, extreme nausea or belching/burping
- A problem with constipation that lasts longer than 1 week after surgery