

Laparoscopic Nephrectomy: Before Your Surgery

What is laparoscopic nephrectomy?

A nephrectomy is surgery to take out part or all of the kidney. One or both kidneys may be taken out. Sometimes other tissue near the kidney is taken out at the same time.

The doctor will put special tools and a thin, lighted tube called a laparoscope through several small cuts in your belly. These cuts are called incisions. Then the doctor will remove your kidney through one of the incisions. The incisions will leave scars that will fade with time.

Your body can work fine with one healthy kidney. But if both kidneys are removed, or if the kidney you have left is not healthy, you will need other treatment after surgery. Your doctor will talk to you about this.

You will probably spend 3 or 4 days in the hospital. You will need to take it easy for 4 to 6 weeks at home.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How do you prepare for surgery?

Surgery can be stressful. This information will help you understand what you can expect. And it will help you safely prepare for surgery.



Preparing for surgery

- You may need to empty your bowels with a laxative or an enema. Your doctor will tell you if you need to do this.
- Be sure you have someone to take you home. Anesthesia and pain medicine will make it unsafe for you to drive or get home on your own.
- Understand exactly what surgery is planned, along with the risks, benefits, and other options.
- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if you should stop taking it before your surgery. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do. These medicines increase the risk of bleeding.

- Tell your doctor ALL the medicines and natural health products you take. Some may increase the risk of problems during your surgery. Your doctor will tell you if you should stop taking any of them before the surgery and how soon to do it.
- Make sure your doctor and the hospital have a copy of your goals of care plan. It lets others know your health care wishes. It's a good thing to have before any type of surgery or procedure.

Plan Ahead

- **Plan a ride home.** Ask a family member or friend to bring you home after your hospital visit and stay with you for 24 hours.
- **Plan for meals.** Good nutrition is important for your recovery, but cooking may be harder to do right after you get home. Prepare and freeze meals before your surgery or ask friends and family to help you cook or shop for groceries.
- **Get help with chores.** After you get home you may need help. For a short time after your surgery, you may be told to avoid certain physical activities. Plan ahead and arrange to have some help with chores after your surgery.
- **Buy gum or hard candies.** Chewing gum and sucking on hard candies may help get your bowels moving after surgery.

Be as healthy as possible

- **Be active.** Being active before surgery will make it easier for you to be active after surgery. If you're normally active, keep doing your regular activities up to the day of your surgery. If you aren't used to exercising, start slowly. You can start by going for 15 minute walks.
- **Eat healthy.** Eating healthy foods will give your body the nutrients it needs to prepare for and handle the surgery. Eat healthy foods and drink enough fluids in the weeks before your surgery. Your healthcare team will tell you how long before surgery that you need to stop eating and drinking.
- **Manage your medical conditions.** If you have other medical conditions, such as anemia or high or low blood sugar, ask your healthcare team what you need to do to prepare for surgery.
- **Quit tobacco.** You can heal faster and prevent lung problems after surgery if you quit tobacco. Aim to quit smoking and using tobacco and tobacco-like products at least 4 weeks before surgery. Talk to your healthcare team about ways to quit or cut back. **Don't drink alcohol 24 hours before surgery.** Alcohol, cannabis, and other drugs may interact with medicines you take before and after surgery. Talk to your healthcare team if you need help stopping or cutting back on alcohol, cannabis, or other drugs.

Do the following before your surgery to help you feel better sooner and recover faster.

The day before surgery

- Know the time of your surgery, when you need to be at the hospital, and where you need to go when you get there.
- Follow any instructions the healthcare team or your surgeon gave you for your medicines (including herbal or complementary medicines).
- Don't drink alcohol 24 hours before your surgery.



- **Stop** eating at midnight. This is very important!
 - **Stop eating and drinking all non-clear fluids at midnight. This is very important**
 - **You may DRINK CLEAR FLUIDS ONLY up to 3 hours before surgery. This includes BLACK coffee, tea, Gatorade, apple juice and water.**



Morning of surgery

Plan to arrive at the hospital on time.

- Follow any instructions provided
- Bring all of the things you packed for your hospital stay **if** you are being admitted.
- Follow **all** other instructions the healthcare team gave you to prepare for surgery.
- Bring your CPAP if you use one



What happens on the day of surgery?

Follow the instructions exactly about when to stop eating and drinking. If you don't, your surgery may be cancelled. If your doctor told you to take your medicines on the day of surgery, take them with only a sip of water.

- Take a bath or shower before you come in for your surgery. Do not apply lotions, perfumes, deodorants, or nail polish.
- Do not shave the surgical site yourself.
- Take off all jewellery and piercings. And take out contact lenses, if you wear them.

At the hospital



Bring a picture ID health card

- The area for surgery is often marked to make sure there are no errors.
- You will be kept comfortable and safe by your anesthesia provider. You will be asleep during the surgery.
- You will have a tube that drains urine from your bladder. This is called a urinary catheter.
- You may have a small tube coming out of your belly. This tube will drain fluids.
- You may have a thin plastic tube in your nose that goes down the back of your throat into your stomach. It will drain stomach juices. It is usually removed in the days after surgery.

When should you call your doctor?

- You have questions or concerns.
- You don't understand how to prepare for your surgery.
- You become ill before the surgery (such as fever, flu, or a cold).
- You need to reschedule or have changed your mind about having the surgery.

Laparoscopic Nephrectomy: What to Expect at Home

Discharge

How you may feel after your operation

- You may feel nauseated, light headed dizzy or sleepy for up to 24 hours after your surgery
- You may have a slight temperature for 2 days
- You may feel tired for a few days after your surgery

For 24 hours after your surgery do not....

- Drive a vehicle
- Operate heavy equipment
- Drink alcohol or smoke
- Make any important or legal decisions

Your Recovery

A nephrectomy is surgery to take out part or all of the kidney. One or both kidneys may be taken out. Sometimes other tissue near the kidney is taken out at the same time.

Your belly will feel sore after the surgery. This usually lasts about 1 to 2 weeks. Your doctor will give you pain medicine for this. You may also have other symptoms such as nausea, diarrhea, constipation, gas, or a headache.

At first, you may have low energy and get tired quickly. It may take 3 to 6 months for your energy to fully return.

Your body can work fine with one healthy kidney. If both kidneys are removed or your remaining kidney is not healthy, your doctor will talk to you about the kind of treatment you will need after surgery.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to get better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?



Activity

- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.
- Avoid exercises that use your belly muscles and strenuous activities such as bicycle riding, jogging, weight lifting, or aerobic exercise until your doctor says it is okay.
- For at least 4 weeks, avoid lifting anything that would make you strain. This may include a child, heavy grocery bags and milk containers, a heavy briefcase or backpack, cat litter or dog food bags, or a vacuum cleaner.
- Hold a pillow over the cuts the doctor made (incisions) when you cough or take deep breaths. This will support your belly and decrease your pain.
- Do breathing exercises at home as instructed by your doctor. This will help prevent pneumonia.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive again.



Diet

- You can eat your normal diet. If you were on a special diet for your kidneys before surgery, follow that diet until your doctor tells you to stop.
- If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- Drink plenty of fluids (unless your doctor tells you not to).
- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fibre supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.



Medicines

- Your doctor will tell you if and when you can restart your medicines. He or she will also give you instructions about taking any new medicines.
- If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, ask your doctor if and when to start taking it again. Make sure that you understand exactly what your doctor wants you to do.
- Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
 - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
 - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, take an over-the-counter medicine that your doctor recommends. Read and follow all instructions on the label.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
 - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
 - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.



Incision care

- If you have strips of tape on the incisions, leave the tape on for a week or until it falls off.
- Wash the area around the incisions daily with warm, soapy water and pat it dry. Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing. You may cover the incisions with gauze bandages if they weep or rub against clothing. Change the bandages every day.
- Keep the area around the incisions clean and dry.

At Home

- Eat healthy and drink fluids as you did before surgery (unless your healthcare team gives you other instructions).
- Drink oral nutritional supplements (like Ensure Protein Max) for the first month after surgery to give you extra protein and help you heal faster.
- Take less pain medicine as your pain gets better.
- Take your blood thinner and other medicines as you were told.

What is anesthesia?

Anesthesia controls pain. And it keeps all your organs working normally during surgery or another kind of procedure.

Anesthesia can relax you. It can also make you sleepy or forgetful. Or it may make you unconscious. It depends on what kind you get.

Your anesthesia provider (anesthesiologist) will make sure you are comfortable and safe during the procedure or surgery.

The type of anesthesia you have depends on many things, such as:

- The type of surgery or procedure and the reason you are having it.
- Test results, such as blood tests.
- How worried you feel about the surgery.
- Your health. Your doctor and nurses will ask you about any past surgeries. They will ask about any health problems you may have, such as diabetes, lung or heart disease, or a history of stroke. They will want to know if you take medicine, such as blood thinners. Your doctor may also ask if any family members have had any problems with anesthesia. You will talk with your anesthesia provider about your options. In many cases, you may be able to choose the type of anesthesia you have.

What can you expect after having anesthesia?

Right after the surgery, you will be in the recovery room. Nurses will make sure you are comfortable. As the anesthesia wears off, you may feel some pain and discomfort from your surgery.

Tell someone if you have pain. Pain medicine works better if you take it before the pain gets bad.

You may feel some of the effects of anesthesia for a while. It takes time for the effects of the medicine to completely wear off.

- If you had local or regional anesthesia you may feel numb and have less feeling in part of your body. It may also take a few hours for you to be able to move and control your muscles as usual.
- When you first wake up from general anesthesia, you may be confused. Or it may be hard to think clearly. This is normal.
- Don't do anything for 24 hours that requires attention to detail. This includes going to work, making important decisions, or signing any legal documents.

Other common side effects of anesthesia include:

- Nausea and vomiting. This does not usually last long. It can be treated with medicine.
- A slight drop in body temperature. You may feel cold and shiver when you first wake up.
- A sore throat, if you had general anesthesia.
- Muscle aches or weakness.
- Feeling tired.

You may go home the same day of surgery or you may stay in the hospital. Your doctor will check on your recovery from the anesthesia. He or she will answer any questions you may have.

For answers to frequently asked questions about your anesthetic, please visit <https://www.cas.ca/en/about-cas/advocacy/anesthesia-faq>



When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have chest pain, are short of breath, or cough up blood.

Call your doctor or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have pain that does not get better after you take your pain medicine.
- You have symptoms of a urinary tract infection. These may include:
 - Pain or burning when you urinate.
 - A frequent need to urinate without being able to pass much urine.
 - Pain in the flank, which is just below the rib cage and above the waist on either side of the back.
 - Blood in the urine.
 - A fever.
- You have signs of infection, such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
 - Red streaks leading from the incisions.
 - Pus draining from the incisions.
 - A fever.
- You have loose stitches, or your incisions come open.
- You are bleeding from the incisions.

- You cannot urinate.
- You are sick to your stomach or cannot drink fluids.
- You have signs of a blood clot in your leg (called a deep vein thrombosis), such as:
 - Pain in the calf, back of the knee, thigh, or groin.
 - Redness and swelling in your leg.