

# Radical cystectomy recovery plan Going home

Information for patients

## Work

You should be able to return to work within six to 12 weeks of your operation. If your job involves heavy manual work or lifting then it's advisable to wait 12 weeks before starting work again. It's possible your employer might be able to put you on lighter duties for a period of time. If they would like advice please ask them to contact us.

## Driving

You should not drive until you are confident that you can do so safely. This is likely to be when you have returned to most of your normal activities. Usually this will be within two to four weeks of surgery.

It's important that any pain has resolved sufficiently to enable you to perform an emergency stop and turn the steering wheel quickly. If you are in doubt then ring your insurance company for further guidance.

## Hobbies and activities

You are encouraged to consider taking up your hobbies and activities again as soon as possible after surgery. This can help you to maintain your activity levels which will benefit your recovery. You should not need to restrict any activities unless they cause significant pain or involve heavy lifting, in which case avoid them for the first 12 weeks after your operation.

## Sexual relations

Difficulties in resuming sexual relations are extremely common after this type of surgery, in both men and women. It will probably be at least six to 12 weeks before you feel that you are well enough to consider such activity, and it is normal for your sex drive to be affected by tiredness and changes to your body. A significant number of men will have erectile dysfunction due to the surgery and most women will have changes in the shape of the vagina. If either you or your partner have concerns or feel you would like some support, please discuss this with your specialist nurse or doctor when you are reviewed in outpatients, as in some cases there may be treatments available that can help.

## Contact us

Enhanced recovery programme  
Urology department  
E Level West Wing  
University Hospital Southampton NHS Trust  
Tremona Road  
Southampton  
Hampshire  
SO16 6YD

Enhanced Recovery phone/Urology nurse practitioner: **07920 274648**

Urology clinical nurse specialist: **023 8120 4650 / 07818 588417**

Surgical day unit (SDU): **023 8120 6471**

Surgical high dependency unit: **023 8120 6996**

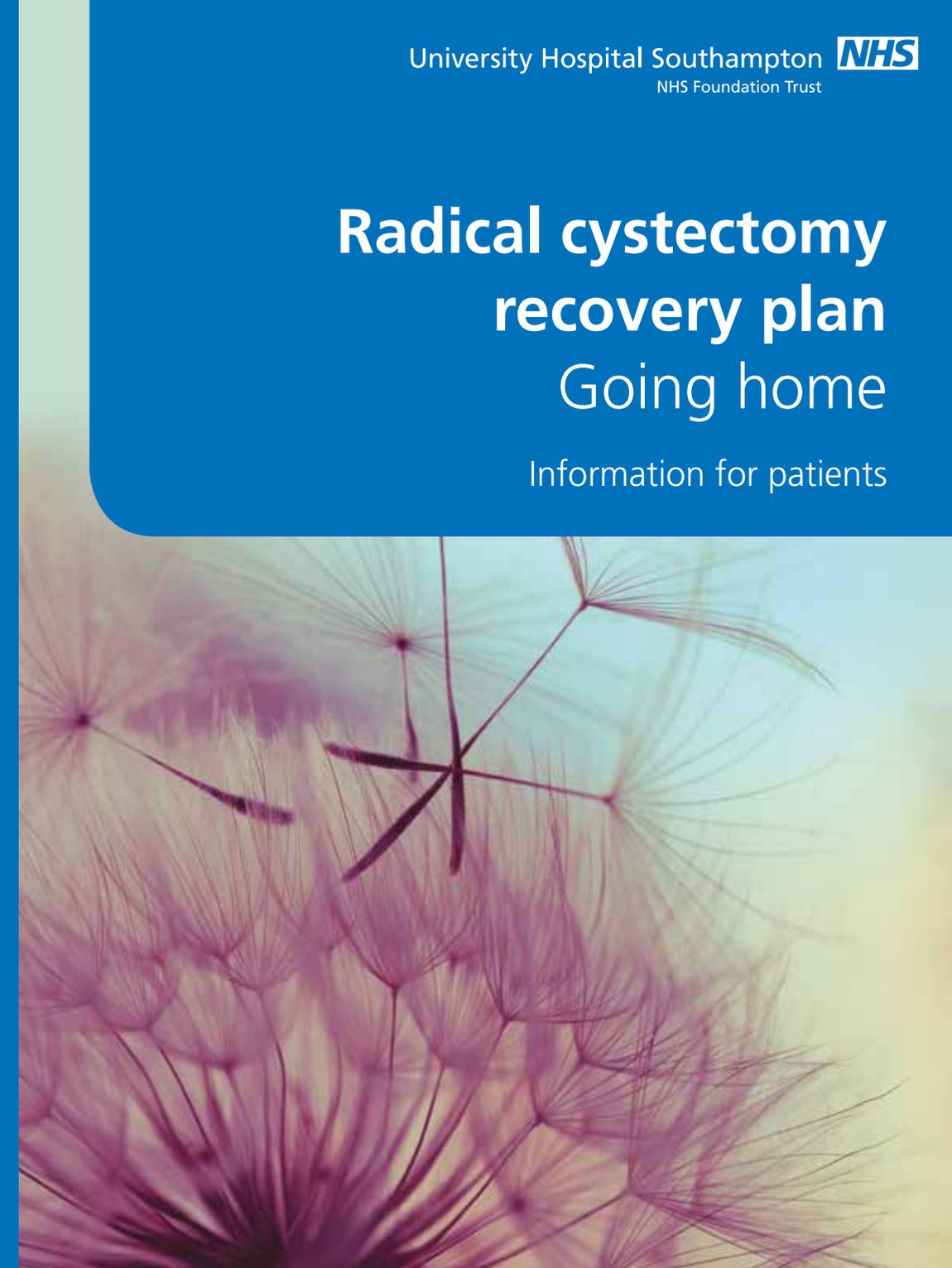
Ward E8 (Urology/HPB): **023 8120 6510**

**If you need a translation of this document,  
an interpreter or a version in large print,  
Braille or on audiotape, please telephone  
023 8120 4688 for help.**

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## What happens after going home?

Most patients discharged from hospital following this operation will not experience complications, but it's important that you know what to look out for. This booklet explains symptoms you need to be aware of and when to seek medical advice, along with some useful information about recovering from your operation.

If you have any concerns during the first two weeks following surgery, please contact us on the enhanced recovery phone number: **07920 274648** to speak to the urology nurse practitioner. This phone will be answered Monday to Friday, between 8am and 6pm. Outside of these hours it will divert to ward E8. If you cannot contact us on either the enhanced recovery phone or the ward number, please ring your GP.

## Stents

The 'stents' in your kidneys (the tubes you can see coming out of your stoma – one red and one blue) will be removed at home or in clinic around ten days after your operation, or possibly later depending on your individual circumstances. This procedure is painless and will be undertaken by your stoma nurse during one of your stoma bag changes. Patients are routinely given an antibiotic injection immediately before this, but more information will be provided for you at the time.

## Abdominal pain

It's not unusual to experience gripping pains (colic) during the first week after surgery to a portion of your bowel. The pain usually lasts for a few minutes and goes away between spasms. Severe pain that lasts for several hours may indicate a leakage of fluid from the area where the bowel has been joined together. This is a rare complication but can be very serious. Therefore, if you have severe pain lasting more than one or two hours, or have a fever and feel generally unwell in the two weeks following your operation, you should contact the enhanced recovery phone or ward immediately, using the telephone numbers provided.

## Your wound

It is normal for your wounds to be slightly red and uncomfortable during the first one or two weeks. Please let us know if your wounds become:

- more inflamed
- more painful or swollen
- or start to discharge fluid

## Your bowels

Your bowel habit may change after removal of part of the bowel and may become loose or constipated. Make sure you eat regular meals three or more times a day, drink adequate amounts of fluid, and take regular walks during the first two weeks after your operation. If constipation lasts for more than three days we advise taking a mild laxative such as magnesium hydroxide. If the constipation is accompanied by vomiting then contact us for advice.

## Stoma

If you have a stoma, your stoma specialist nurse will provide training about this before you go home. If you have any problems with your stoma once back home, please contact your stoma specialist nurse. You will be given contact details before you leave hospital.

## Diet

A balanced, varied diet is recommended, but we suggest you avoid foods that are high in fibre to start with. A high protein diet will also aid your recovery. Try eating three or more times a day. Some people find snacking regularly can be helpful in the first few weeks. If you are finding it difficult to eat you may benefit from having three to four nourishing, high protein, high calorie drinks such as Build-up or Complan (available in supermarkets and chemists) to supplement your food.

You may find that some foods upset you and cause loose bowel motions. If that is the case you should avoid those foods for the first few weeks following your surgery.

If you have diarrhoea it's important to drink extra fluids to replace those lost.

If you are losing weight without trying to, or are struggling to eat enough, you may benefit from a consultation with the dietitian. Ask your GP or consultant to refer you.

## Exercise

Walking is encouraged from day one after your operation. You should plan to undertake regular exercise several times a day and gradually increase this during the next four weeks, until you are back to your normal level of activity.

The main restriction we would place on exercise is that you avoid heavy lifting until at least twelve weeks following your surgery. If you are planning to restart routine exercise such as jogging or swimming you should wait until about six weeks after your operation and start gradually. Please ask your stoma nurse if you need further guidance regarding the type of bag and/or additional support belt use.

Allow common sense to guide you as you increase your levels of activity, do as much as you feel you can do without exhausting yourself. In general, if the wound is still uncomfortable, modify your exercise. Once the wounds are pain-free you can normally undertake most activities.

When you get home, you will feel extremely tired and are likely to require a sleep during the day. This is normal and will improve during the next four to twelve weeks.