

Patient information factsheet

Open nephrectomy Enhanced recovery programme

We have given you this factsheet because you have had an open nephrectomy (an operation to remove your kidney through an incision (cut) in the side of your tummy) and have been placed on the enhanced recovery programme. It explains what the enhanced recovery programme is, what the programme for this operation involves and what to expect as you recover. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have and enables you and your family to take an active part in your recovery. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is an enhanced recovery programme?

Having an operation can be both physically and emotionally stressful. Enhanced recovery is an evidence-based approach that helps people recover more quickly after having a major operation. Enhanced recovery programmes are based on research that has shown that the earlier a person gets out of bed and starts walking, eating and drinking after having an operation, the shorter their recovery time will be.

The open nephrectomy enhanced recovery programme aims to enable you to be well enough to go home within three to five days of your operation.

What to expect after your operation

Eating and drinking

After your operation, it is important that you eat and drink well, as this will help with your recovery. We will introduce food and fluids slowly after your operation to ensure you heal well and to reduce the risk of complications.

You will be able to have small sips of water as soon as you wake up from your operation. We will limit your fluid intake to 750ml for the first 24 hours after your operation. You should aim to drink nutritious fluids, such as tea, coffee, Fortisips and Fortijuices, instead of water.

You will then be able to move onto a soft, moist diet (foods that are easy to digest, such as soups and omelettes) once you pass wind.

It is normal for people to have a reduced appetite after an operation and, in some cases, feel nauseous (sick). If this happens, let your nurse know and they will be able to give you a medication to help with this.

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If you vomit multiple times and your bowel isn't working properly after your operation, we may:

- insert a tube into your nostril and pass it down into your stomach to allow us to drain your stomach.
- insert a drip into a vein in your arm to give you intravenous (directly into a vein) feed (also known as parenteral nutrition).

We will discuss these with you in more detail if necessary.

If you are able to, we recommend eating little and often (including having snacks) until your appetite returns. You can then return to your normal diet as soon as you feel able to.

Pain relief medication

During your operation, we may place some tubes around the wounds on your tummy. We will use these to give you local anaesthetic to help ease any pain after your operation. We will usually remove these the day after your operation once you start moving around.

After your operation, we will give you pain relief medication (paracetamol or ibuprofen) by mouth. Occasionally, some people may need a stronger pain relief medication, such as liquid morphine or dihydrocodeine, to help manage their pain. While this stronger pain relief medication can help pain, it does also slow down bowel function and can make you feel sleepy, which can slow down your overall recovery.

We may give you patient-controlled analgesia (PCA). This is a device that allows you to give yourself a set dose of pain relief medication intravenously (via a vein in your arm) when you need it by pressing a button. We will stop PCA when you no longer need it (usually after the first night) and return to giving you other pain relief medication by mouth as needed.

Getting out of bed and walking

Getting out of bed and walking is one of the most important things that you can do to speed up your recovery after your operation.

The day of your operation	After your operation, we will move you back to the ward. Once on the ward, it is important that you sit upright in your bed and start moving around your bed as soon as you can.
The day after your operation	To encourage blood flow around your body, we will then help you to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• get out of bed• sit in a chair for at least four hours• walk around your bed and the ward

Every day after this you should increase the amount of time you spend sitting out of bed and how far you walk. We may perform a stairs assessment (a physiotherapist will check whether you are able to go up and down stairs safely) if necessary (if you have stairs at home) before you leave hospital.

Breathing exercises

After your operation, it is important that you start doing deep breathing exercises to help prevent a chest infection developing. We will give you an information sheet that explains how to do these exercises (see 'useful links' section). If you need any further help with doing these exercises, please speak to the nurse looking after you.

Preventing blood clots

While you are recovering in hospital, we will give you a daily injection of enoxaparin (a blood-thinning medication) in your tummy to help thin your blood and reduce the risk of blood clots developing in your legs.

We will also give you a pair of white anti-embolism stockings to wear during your stay in hospital and then at home until you are back to your normal level of activity. We will show you how to put these on.

Lines and tubes

During your operation, we will place a catheter (a thin, flexible tube) into your bladder to help empty it. We will usually remove this catheter as soon as you are able to move around comfortably.

We may also place a drain (a tube that removes excess fluid from a surgical site to prevent infection and aid healing) in your tummy. We may place the drain into a bag, so you can move around while the drain is in place. We will check the drain each day and remove it once the fluid drainage has settled.

We may also insert a drip into a vein in your arm or neck to give you intravenous (directly into a vein) fluids and medications. This is the fastest way of getting fluids and medications into your body. We will usually stop using the drip the day after your operation.

What to expect after leaving hospital

When the medical team caring for you feel you are medically fit, you will be able to go home. We advise arranging for a family member or friend to pick you up from hospital if possible. You will not be able to drive yourself home.

Discharge summary

When you leave hospital, we will give you a copy of your discharge summary. Please keep this in a safe place as it contains details about your hospital stay and who to contact if you have any questions or concerns. We will also send a copy of this discharge summary to your general practitioner (GP).

Recovery time

It may take up to three months for you to feel recovered from your surgery.

Eating and drinking

It is important that you continue to eat a healthy, balanced diet when you get home. The Eatwell Guide breaks down how much we should eat from each food group (for example, carbohydrates and protein) to achieve a healthy, balanced diet. For more information about how to eat well, please visit: www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-guidelines-and-food-labels/the-eatwell-guide

If your appetite is reduced while you recover from your operation, you may find it helpful to:

- eat things that are high in calories
- eat little and often
- gradually increase your portion size
- prioritise eating carbohydrates (our main source of energy) and protein (essential for wound healing) over vegetables

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- eat cold, plain, dry foods (if you are feeling sick)
- buy some nutritious drinks (for example, Complan) and food (these can be found in supermarkets and pharmacies)

Eating fresh fruit, vegetables, wholemeal bread and cereals will help prevent constipation (where you have changes to how you poo).

If you have diarrhoea, it is important that you drink lots of fluids to replace the fluids you have lost.

Exercise

It is important to exercise every day while you recover. You should aim to exercise multiple times a day and gradually increase how much you do until you are back to your normal level of activity. We recommend starting with short walks and then gradually increasing the distance and/or how often you walk each day.

It is normal to feel tired when you first start exercising. Make sure you rest regularly. Do not do any heavy lifting (anything heavier than a kettle of water) until at least six weeks after your operation.

Exercising regularly also reduces your risk of developing blood clots in your legs.

Medication

After your operation, it is important that you are comfortable enough to cough, take deep breaths, walk and do exercises. We will prescribe you pain relief medication when you leave hospital to ensure your pain is controlled to allow you to do these things comfortably at home. It is important that you take the prescribed pain relief medication regularly for the first few days. Not moving because of pain will slow down your recovery and may lead to complications.

After the first few days, only take the pain relief medication when needed (when you experience pain). Remember to always read the instructions before taking any medications. Some medications must be taken with food.

Some pain relief medications can cause constipation. We may prescribe you a mild laxative (a type of medicine that can help soften stool and treat constipation) to take while you take the pain relief medication.

You will need to give yourself a daily enoxaparin injection for 28 days after your operation to prevent blood clots. We will teach you how to safely do this at home before you leave hospital and provide you with the necessary equipment.

If we stopped or changed the dose of any of your regular medications before your operation or during your stay in hospital because of the effect on your kidney function, we will ask your GP to arrange some repeat blood tests and adjust your prescription, if necessary.

Wounds

We will close most wounds with dissolvable stitches (stitches that do not need to be removed) and/or skin glue. If you need any further wound care after going home (for example, you need to have your stitches removed or you need your dressing changed), we will arrange for you to visit a practice nurse at your GP surgery or for a district nurse to visit you at home.

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It is normal for your wounds to be slightly red and uncomfortable for the first one or two weeks. Scar tissue may develop as your wounds heal, making your wounds feel lumpy. This will usually improve with time.

Washing and showering

It is very important to keep your wounds dry until they have fully healed (this usually takes around one week but it may sometimes take longer). While your wounds heal, you can have showers, but these should be kept short, and you must not get your wounds completely soaked. Do not have baths.

For the first week or two after your operation, you should pat your wounds dry with a clean towel as soon as you are out of the shower. Do not rub your wounds, as this may cause them to open.

Driving

You must not drive until you are confident that you can drive safely. You should be able to do an emergency stop and turn the steering wheel quickly without experiencing any pain. For many people, this is when they are able to do most of their normal daily activities (usually around six weeks after this type of operation).

If you are not sure when you can start driving again, contact your insurance company for further guidance.

Work

Most people are well enough to return to work six to 12 weeks after their operation. However, if your work involves heavy, manual labour, you should not return to work until at least 12 weeks after your operation (unless you can be placed on lighter duties).

You will be able to self-certify as sick for seven days. After that, your employer may want to see a medical certificate. Please ask us for a medical certificate (sick note) before you leave hospital. If you need an extended medical certificate, you can speak to your GP.

When to seek medical help

Serious complications after this type of operation do not occur very often, but it is important that you know what to look out for while you recover.

Contact us **immediately** if you experience any of the following symptoms **within the first two weeks** after your operation:

- a high temperature (38°C or above)
- a fever (cold sweats and shivering)
- increased tummy pain (that is not improved by over-the-counter pain relief medication)
- calf pain and/or swelling
- chest pain
- breathlessness
- bloating
- vomiting (being sick)
- symptoms of a wound infection (a hot, red, swollen or painful wound or fluid leaking from the wound)
- feeling generally unwell

Follow-up care

We will send you a letter in the post for a follow-up outpatient appointment. This appointment will usually be four to six weeks after you leave hospital. At this appointment, we will ask you how you are getting on and discuss your histology results (the findings from a microscopic examination of a tissue or cell sample taken during your operation).

Your feedback

Your feedback helps us to celebrate what's working well and identify where we need to improve. We would be grateful if you would take a moment to review the service you received while in our care. To complete our short online survey, visit: <https://gthr.co.uk/c0c9> or scan the QR code below. Please select 'E8 ward' as the service you visited.



Contact us

If you have any further questions or concerns in the **first two weeks** after your operation, contact us.

Urology advanced clinical practitioners (enhanced recovery line)
Telephone: **07920 274648** (24-hour line)

E8 ward (urology and HPB)
Telephone: **023 8120 6510** (24-hour line)

After two weeks, when the enhanced recovery period is over, contact your urology clinical nurse specialist or GP for advice.

Outside of working hours, contact NHS **111** for advice.

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/tests-and-treatments/enhanced-recovery

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Respiratory/The-active-cycle-of-breathing-technique-ACBT-747-PIL.pdf

www.baus.org.uk/_userfiles/pages/files/Patients/Leaflets/Partial%20nephrectomy%20open.pdf

www.baus.org.uk/_userfiles/pages/files/patients/leaflets/Radical%20nephrectomy%20open.pdf

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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