

2014

Kidney Removal

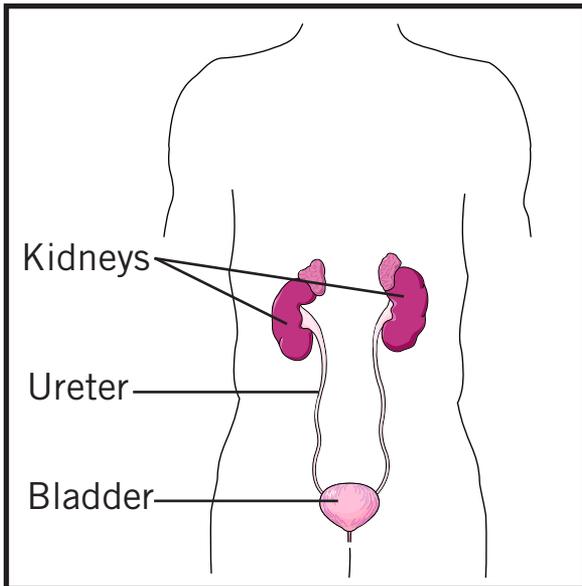
Kidney Removal

The medical name for removing a kidney is nephrectomy. This pamphlet will answer some of your questions about your stay in hospital and care at home.

How do my kidneys work?

A kidney is the same shape as a kidney bean and about the size of your fist. The kidneys are just above your waist and are partly covered by your rib cage.

The kidneys make urine (pee) by removing waste material from your blood that your body does not need. Urine then travels through hollow tubes (ureters) to the bladder. Your urine is then stored in the bladder until you go to the bathroom.



Can I be healthy with only one kidney?

Yes, if your remaining kidney is healthy. The remaining kidney can do all the work.

Before your surgery

Please read the pamphlet *Before and After Day Surgery* to learn more about day surgery or ask a staff member for more information.

After your surgery

You will be taken to a special nursing unit to recover from the anesthetic (sleeping medicine). Your breathing, pulse, and blood pressure will be checked often. When you are fully awake and stable, you will be taken to your hospital room.

Intravenous (IV) and food

- You may have an IV for about 24 hours. It is usually taken out when you are able to eat and drink again.
- Your nurse will be checking your bowels. You will be able to eat when your bowels are active again.

Measuring fluid

- Your nurse will ask you to keep track of how much you drink.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of fluid a day.
- You will be asked to measure your urine after your catheter (hollow tube for pee) is taken out.

Incision

- Your wound will be closed with staples (metal clips) or Steri-Strips™ (special tape).
- Sometimes, the nurse will take them out before you go home. If not, you will need to make an appointment with your family doctor who will take out the staples 7-10 days after your surgery.
- Steri-Strips™ can be peeled off when they get loose 7-10 days after your surgery.

Discomfort and pain

It is normal to have pain after surgery. Talk about pain medication choices with your doctor or nurse. Please read the pamphlet *Managing Pain After Surgery* or ask a staff member for more information. You will get pain medication as needed. We recommend that you take pain medication regularly for the first 24 hours, and before doing any activity. You and your nurse can plan activities around when your medication is given.

Bladder catheter

You may have a catheter in your bladder that is connected to a collection bag. The bag should always hang below your bladder. The catheter is usually taken out 24-48 hours (1-2 days) after your surgery.

Drainage tube

You may have a drain near the incision (cut) for a few days. It will drain blood and fluid from the area.

At home

Controlling pain or soreness

- You may take pills for pain or soreness for a short period of time. Take the pills as you are told.
- **Do not drink alcohol when you are taking pain pills.**

Healthy eating

- It may take some time for your appetite to return to normal. During this time, it may help to eat smaller meals more often throughout the day.
- Healthy meals will help your body heal.
- The foods that you eat will affect your bowel movements. Eat foods high in fibre (such as bran, vegetables, and fruit).
- Drink 8 glasses of water a day (unless you are not allowed to because of another health problem).
- Some pain pills can cause constipation. Ask your doctor about using stool softeners or laxatives if needed.
- Remember that you **do not** need to have a bowel movement every day to be healthy.

Activity

- You will find that you will get tired easily and may need extra rest. Your energy will come back slowly.
- Some examples of good activities are: light housework, preparing small meals, and riding as a passenger in a car for short distances.
- Walking is the best exercise for you after surgery. Start slowly and increase the distance each day.
- Go back to having sex when you feel well enough.
- Do not drive a car for 2 weeks.
- Do not drive if you are taking pain pills.
- Always wear a SEATBELT to lower the chance of injuring the other kidney.
- Talk about going back to work with your doctor.

For the next 6 weeks do not:

- › Lift anything heavier than 10 pounds (such as children, laundry, groceries, luggage).
- › Move furniture.
- › Mow the lawn.
- › Shovel snow.
- › Take long car trips (if you have to take a long car trip, have someone else drive).
- › Do strenuous (hard) exercise.

Care of your incision

- You may shower 2 days after your surgery. Pat your incision lightly to wash and dry. There **should not** be any drainage or increased redness from the area. If your bandage must be left on, tape Saran Wrap® (plastic wrap) over it to keep it dry.
- You may have a bath when the incision is healed in about 10 days.

Follow-up care

- A visit will be booked with your doctor after you go home. It is very important that you keep this appointment.
- Train your bladder by going to the bathroom at least every 4 hours. **Do not hold your urine.** Always go to the bathroom when you feel the urge.

Call your doctor if you have:

- Fever and/or chills
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Increased redness, swelling, or warmth around the incision
- Increased pain or tenderness around the incision
- Separation of the edges of the incision
- Drainage from the incision
- Blood in your urine
- Trouble passing urine

If you need to see a doctor, please contact your family doctor or go to the nearest Emergency Department unless otherwise instructed by your Urologist.

Looking for more health information?

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years.