

Nephrectomy: *Home Instructions*

What is a nephrectomy?

A nephrectomy [nuh- FREK-tuh-mee] is surgery to remove all or part of a kidney. You may need this procedure if one of your kidneys is not working right due to damage or disease. This procedure is also done when someone donates a healthy kidney. Since most people have two kidneys, it is possible to live a normal life with only one.

What can I expect after nephrectomy?

- You will be checked to make sure your remaining kidney is working right.
- You can expect to have some pain or discomfort near the incision area.

How do I care for myself at home?

Medicine

- Take your pain medicines exactly as ordered by your doctor. Your pain medicine will help to reduce your pain but won't take it away completely. Do not take more than your doctor prescribes, even if you have pain. If your medicine isn't working, tell your doctor.
- Pain medicines can cause constipation. Ask your doctor if you can take a stool softener or mild laxative if you need one.

Activity

- Do not drive until you are no longer taking pain medicine and your doctor says it's okay.
- Adjust your activity level to your energy level. You will feel weak and tired for the first few weeks. Increase your activity slowly. If you feel pain, stop what you are doing.
- Do not lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds during the first 4 weeks.
- Breathe deeply. This may hurt, but breathing deeply can help you heal and prevent complications.



When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you:

- Have a fever of 101°F (38°C) or higher
- Have redness or swelling in the area of your incision
- Feel sick to your stomach
- Are vomiting
- Have pain that is getting worse and does not go away with rest
- Have trouble urinating (peeing) or you see blood in your urine.

Diet

- You can go back to your usual diet when your doctor says its okay.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water every day. Avoid alcohol and beverages with added sugar. **Never drink alcohol when taking opioid pain medicines.**

Wound care

- Keep your incision clean and dry.
- Follow your doctor's instructions for showering.
- Do not bathe, swim, or use a hot tub until your doctor says it's okay.
- Go to all of your follow-up appointments as scheduled by your doctor.



My follow-up appointment

Date/Time: _____

Place: _____

Doctor: _____



Questions for my doctor

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