

# Laparoscopic donor nephrectomy aftercare

**This leaflet aims to provide and explain information about returning to your everyday activities after your donor nephrectomy. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or the nurse caring for you.**

## **When can I leave hospital?**

You will usually go home two days after surgery. You will need someone to take you home upon discharge and have someone stay with you for at least 24 hours. It is sometimes helpful to have a pillow for the journey home to ease any discomfort from the seatbelt.

## **After I leave hospital**

You will be able to eat and drink normally after your operation. We advise a high fibre diet because some of your painkillers may cause constipation, which is not good for your recovery. Please ensure to drink plenty of fluids. We recommend two litres of fluid a day, which can include water, squash, tea or coffee. You may find that your appetite will take time to get back to normal so try to eat small amounts, more often, as this will help your digestive system get back to normal.

You are likely to have some discomfort after your operation. However this should be adequately managed with the painkillers you'll be given upon discharge. Please do not take NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, e.g. Ibuprofen, Diclofenac, Naproxen) as these may cause harm to your remaining kidney. You may also be given some laxatives along with your painkillers, to avoid constipation.

Compression stockings will be given to you upon discharge. These are washable and should be worn for two weeks, until your follow up appointment. This is to minimise the risk of getting a blood clot / DVT (Deep Vein Thrombosis).

You may feel tired or emotional once you return home. This is a normal reaction as your body is recovering and utilising a lot of energy to heal itself, so do not worry. You may want to discuss this with the doctor at your follow-up appointment.

## **Looking after your wound**

### **Wound**

You will normally have up to three small scars where the keyhole (laparoscopic) instruments have been introduced into the abdomen. There will be one larger scar through which the kidney is removed. You may feel discomfort in these areas, however this should subside. It can take up to two to four weeks for your scars to fully heal.

### **Stitches**

The stitches used to close the skin are absorbable (unless otherwise mentioned) and therefore will not require removal. Any non-dissolvable stitches will be removed at your follow-up appointment with the surgeon.

### **Dressings**

You will be given three days' worth of dressings once you have been discharged home. Following this, you do not need to apply dressings unless there is any indication (bleeding, fluid leaking from the wound sites etc.). In this case, you should call the Transplant Nurses for advice. Out of hours, you can call Champney's ward directly.

You can shower as normal, patting dry your wounds with a clean fresh towel which is only used to dry your wounds. Replace any dressings if needed. We advise you not to have a bath in which your wound will be soaked.

## **What should I do regarding my work?**

Most people feel they can return to work at around four weeks after the operation, though this does depend on your job and can be discussed with your surgeon or transplant nurse. Do not perform any heavy lifting for at least 10-12 week to allow your wounds to heal properly and to reduce the chance of developing a hernia.

We can provide you with a 'Fitness to Work' note up to six weeks after your surgery; if you require this, ensure to consult the doctor before you are discharged and this will be given to you.

If you have any further queries regarding the nature of your job and returning to it after your operation, your doctor will aid you in deciding.

## **When can I return to normal activities?**

### **Exercise**

After your operation, try to remain mobile and carry on with daily activities at a gradual, comfortable pace without straining yourself. This does not include any heavy lifting or strenuous sports/activities. Everyone needs time off to recover after an operation, a good balance is not detaching yourself so much so that you begin to feel isolated, as this may regress or slow down your overall recovery.

### **Driving**

At your surgical outpatient clinic appointment the doctor will advise you when you are safe to drive. This is usually two to three weeks after your operation. If you drive before then, your insurance will not be valid. Before you drive you need to be comfortable with things such as emergency stops and manoeuvring your car and this will take time as your body strengthens.

## What should I do if I have a problem?

If you have any queries or problems once you are home, prior to your follow up appointment (two weeks after your operation), please call your transplant nurse or Champney's ward (if out of hours) details of which are given below.

Some common symptoms about which to contact us are:

- Any new onset pain, redness or swelling around the wound sites with possible discharge
- Worsening or non-specific abdominal pain in or around the region of the operation
- Noticing blood in your urine or that your urine output is decreased.

**Important:** If you experience any one sided, painful leg swelling or new onset shortness of breath/chest pain, go to your local accident and emergency department (A&E) or call 999.

## Will I have a follow-up appointment?

You will have a follow up appointment two weeks after your operation at your local transplant unit. You will be notified of this over the phone or in the post. If you are not notified of your appointment date, contact your transplant nurse.

After this, you will be seen after 6-12 weeks, then six monthly, followed by yearly check-ups.

## Valuable advice

Now that you have had your operation, you've probably become much more aware of your body and its workings. For you to have been deemed a suitable kidney donor, you will have been advised to make certain lifestyle changes. These should continue and may include:

## **Quitting Smoking**

Quitting is not an easy task however with the right support and guidance you can do it. NHS Stop Smoking Services are one of the most effective ways to stop for good and their help is completely free. Ask your GP for more details, take a look online at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) or call the free Smokefree National Helpline on 0300 123 1044.

## **Exercise**

The Department of Health (DoH), in its latest guidelines (07/09/2019) advises at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week or at least 75 minutes of vigorous intensity per week. Examples of moderate intensity activity include swimming, brisk walking and cycling. Vigorous intensity activity includes running, sports and taking the stairs.

In addition, the guidelines advise building strength to keep muscles, bones and joints strong at least two days during the week. This can be in the gym, doing yoga or even carrying your heavy bags. The more vigorous activities should start at least 10-12 weeks after your operation.

## **Diet**

- Improve your diet; cut out unhealthy snacks / fatty food and switch to ensuring you get your five portions of fruit and vegetables per day.
- Remember to keep your fluid intake to a minimum of two litres per day.

Overall, keeping your weight in a healthy range will reduce your risks of getting diabetes and hypertension and will benefit your remaining kidney.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

St George's - Transplant nurses	Phone: 020 8725 0305 (Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 3.30pm) Email: <a href="mailto:stgh-tr.sghtxsisters@nhs.net">stgh-tr.sghtxsisters@nhs.net</a>
St George's - Champney's Ward	020 8725 1080 / 020 8725 0062
St Helier's - Transplant Nurses	Phone: 020 8296 4522 Email: <a href="mailto:est-tr.TXnurse@nhs.net">est-tr.TXnurse@nhs.net</a>
Brighton - Transplant Nurses	Phone: 01273 067 478 Email: <a href="mailto:bsu-tr.BrightonRenalTransplant-workup@nhs.net">bsu-tr.BrightonRenalTransplant-workup@nhs.net</a>

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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