

## Cancer services

# Your recovery after a nephrectomy (partial or radical)

## Information for patients, relatives and carers

### Introduction

This leaflet explains what to expect after your surgery and when you go home. It is important that you understand what to expect and feel able to take an active role in your recovery. We hope this leaflet will answer some of the questions that you may have. If there is anything that you or those important to you are not sure about, please contact your clinical nurse specialist (CNS) via the Macmillan Cancer Navigator Service.

### What will happen after my operation?

After your operation you will be encouraged to practice deep breathing and to move your legs around, as this will help speed up your recovery. In the evening you will be encouraged to get out of bed with the assistance of the nurses. You will be monitored closely, and we may need to wake you up multiple times throughout the night so that we can check your blood pressure and urine output. You will be able to eat and drink on your return to the ward and your fluid drip will be removed from your arm once you are drinking properly.

### How quickly will I be up and about?

You will be encouraged to get up and sit out in a chair on the evening of your surgery. On the day after your operation, you will be assisted by one of the nurses to walk and to remain out of bed. It is important to get moving very soon after surgery as this reduces the risk of clots in the legs, and of chest infections. The amount of time you will be out of bed increases every day.

### When will I be discharged?

We expect you to be in hospital between one and three days. You must be eating and drinking, and you need to be able to walk about on your own.

Before you go home, your pain will be well controlled on tablets. You will be given a supply of pain killers that we will have started you on before you leave. You shouldn't need any more of them, but please speak to your GP if you feel you do.

On your discharge, you should have a relative or friend to accompany you home. Please speak with the ward if you have no one who can accompany you home.

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## What to expect after the operation

### Scars, stitches & dressings

You can expect between three to five small scars at different points on your abdomen. One of these will be longer than the others as it is through this wound that the specimen is removed.

You do not need to keep the scars covered, though some people find it more comfortable to do so. You do not need to worry about getting the scar wet. Most stitches will not require any removal as they will be dissolvable – your surgical team will advise you if there are any stitches that need to be removed. This can normally be performed by the practice nurse at your GP's surgery.

### Discomfort

You will experience some pain and discomfort around the scars, especially in the first week after the surgery. You may also experience some pain in your shoulders for a few days after the operation. Some patients can also experience some testicular pain and swelling after the operation, this normally settles within a few weeks. Over the counter painkillers should be able to relieve this effectively for you.

### Tiredness and feeling emotional

Your body is using a lot of energy to heal itself, so you will feel more tired than normal – sometimes it can come upon you suddenly. Many people also find that feel upset or emotional in the days and weeks after their operation. There is more information on further support available listed at the end of this leaflet

## What to look out for

If you notice any of these symptoms, please contact your GP:

- If the wounds are red and feel hot to touch or are leaking fluid or very painful
- Once you start passing urine normally, if you have a burning/stinging sensation or notice an offensive smell

If you have any further questions please contact your CNS via the Macmillan Navigator service.

## What to do in the weeks following your operation

### Diet

You should aim to eat a healthy diet with plenty of fluids and fibre while you are recovering. Fresh fruit and vegetables will help keep your bowels regular as your bowel can be 'lazy' for several days after the operation and painkillers can also cause constipation.

### Activity

You should increase exercise gradually – start with short walks and gentle exercise.

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Many patients worry that standing up straight will pull at their stitches. However, it is important to try and get up out of bed, stand up straight and move around, as this will actually help you to recover more quickly.

You should however avoid heavy lifting for six weeks after the operation, as any sudden increase in abdominal pressure can cause pain in the wounds.

### **Driving**

You should avoid driving for six weeks after the operation or until you can safely perform an emergency stop.

### **Returning to work**

You can return to work when you feel fit and depending on your job. Usually, 4-6 weeks off work are needed following discharge. Please speak with your GP if you need a fit (sick) note whilst you are off work.

## **What are the next steps?**

Following discharge, you will usually have had your first follow up appointment 4 to 6 weeks after you leave hospital with the urology team. You will also be referred to see the oncologist, who based on your results will discuss and plan your follow up schedule for your situation.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact your CNS via the Macmillan navigator service.

## **Further sources of support and information**

### **Macmillan cancer navigator service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

This is a single point of contact for cancer patients at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, and their family, friends and carers. The service is here to help you to navigate your care and resolve queries that you may have. Our Navigators can access information about your appointments, connect you to appropriate services and signpost you on to further support. They can also book you in for a telephone call back from your Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS) if you have a question that needs clinical input.

The service is open Monday to Friday 08:30 to 16.30 excluding bank holidays. (The service is closed for training between 14.00- 14.45 on Thursdays.)

Call: **020 3313 0303**

### **Macmillan cancer information and support service at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust**

The Macmillan cancer information and support service offers free support and information to anyone affected by cancer, including family and loved ones. The service has physical centres at Charing Cross and Hammersmith Hospitals, and also offers virtual and telephone support.

When you call or visit you can speak to one of the Macmillan cancer team one-on-one about whatever matters most to you. You can sign up to a range of weekly virtual groups that provide the opportunity to connect with other people with cancer in a relaxed environment. You can also speak to our Macmillan welfare and benefits adviser, who can offer patients of the Trust tailored advice on additional financial support.

The service is open Monday-Thursday (excluding bank holidays), with various drop-ins available within our physical centres. For more information please call us on **020 3313 5170** or email [imperial.macmillansupportservice@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.macmillansupportservice@nhs.net)

### **Maggie's West London**

Maggie's is a cancer charity that provides the emotional, practical and social support to people with cancer and their family and friends.

The centre offers a calming and beautiful space, a professional team of support staff, and the opportunity to talk and share with a community of people who have been through cancer too.

Maggie's centres are warm, friendly and informal places full of light and open space, with a big kitchen table at the heart of the building. Maggie's West London is located in the grounds of Charing Cross Hospital but is independent of our hospital.

The centre is open Monday to Friday, 09.00-17.00. For more information please call **020 7386 1750**.

### **Macmillan Support Line**

The Macmillan Support Line offers confidential support to people living with cancer and their loved ones. This support line is a national line provided by Macmillan and is independent of our hospital.

The Support Line is open every day, 08:00 to 20:00. Please call: **0808 808 000** or visit [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk)

## **How do I make a comment about my visit?**

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at [imperial.pals@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.pals@nhs.net) The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street  
London W2 1NY

Email: [ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net](mailto:ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net)

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

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## Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:  
[imperial.communications@nhs.net](mailto:imperial.communications@nhs.net)

## Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: [www.imperial.nhs.uk](http://www.imperial.nhs.uk)

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