

Aftercare following an operation to donate your kidney

Renal and Transplant Department

Information for Patients

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Introduction

You have given a very precious gift and should feel extremely proud of yourself. **Thank you.**

It is important now to care for yourself and make sure you follow the advice given in this leaflet to help you make a speedy recovery.

Pain relief

You will be discharged from the ward with pain relief medication and we will tell you how and when to take it. As the weeks pass your pain will improve and you won't need to take the pain relief medication as often. **Do not** take any non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as Nurofen, ibuprofen, diclofenac or naproxen) from now on, as these can sometimes cause damage to your remaining kidney. Your GP or pharmacist will be able to advise you further.

Taking care of your wound

Your wound will have dissolvable stitches and will be covered by a dressing for the first few days. You may still have your dressing when you leave hospital. If so, you will need to change it if it gets wet or dirty. Try and keep the wound dry until it has healed. You can shower but avoid taking a bath for the first 2 weeks.

Problems after the operation are rare however it is important that you let the Transplant Team know if your wound looks red, feels hot or is leaking fluid or pus. This could be a sign of an infection which may need antibiotics.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

You should also let the Transplant Team know if there is a bulge or swelling near the surgical wound. This may be due to a collection of fluid that may need to be drained with a small needle inserted under the skin. It may also be due to a hernia which may need surgical repair to strengthen the area at a later date.

If you have a fever, chills, cough or feel weak and achy, contact the Transplant Ward (0116 2584126) to talk to a doctor for advice.

When will I be able to get back to normal activity?

Avoid lifting any heavy objects for 12 weeks after your operation. This will allow the wound and muscles to heal, reducing the risk of a hernia.

Donors often say that tiredness is the main side effect of kidney donation. It is therefore important to pace yourself and not overdo things. Walking is a good way to exercise. Gradually increase the distance you walk as you are able, but remember however far you walk you will need to walk back that distance too.

Avoid driving until you are pain free and able to do an emergency stop if needed. Your doctor will advise you when it is safe to drive, this is usually 2 to 3 weeks and the doctor will sign you off when seen in clinic. We recommend that you take the car out for short journeys at first, to make sure you are comfortable, before trying longer journeys. **You will need to check your car insurance policy as some policies state that you cannot drive for 6 weeks after abdominal surgery.** It is important to check that you are covered before driving.

You can start sexual relations whenever you feel ready and are pain free. We advise female patients to have a planned pregnancy and wait at least 12 months after donating a kidney before becoming pregnant. Please let the doctor or midwife caring for you know that you have donated a kidney as soon as possible so they can follow you up closely.

We advise that you do not fly on an aeroplane for at least 4 weeks after your operation. This is due to your increased risk of developing a blood clot in your leg (deep vein thrombosis (DVT)) after surgery. Your surgeon will let you know when you are safe to fly.

Will I need to follow a special diet after my operation?

It is important that you drink plenty of fluids (about 2 litres or 8 glasses of fluid per day). You may need to drink more than this in hot weather.

You can drink alcohol in moderation. Remember that alcohol causes dehydration, so you are encouraged to drink a glass of water between alcoholic drinks.

You do not need to keep to any special diet restrictions however we recommend that you stick to a healthy balanced diet. Try to avoid becoming overweight as this will put extra stress on your remaining kidney.

Blood pressure

Your blood pressure may go up and you may need medication to make sure it is at the right level to prevent any long term damage. If you have any concerns contact the Live Donor Co-ordinator or visit your GP and request a blood pressure check.

When will I be able to return to work?

When you can return to your job will be different for each person. Usually 3 to 6 weeks off work are needed but this will depend on the type of job you do. In some cases, depending on your circumstances and job, you may need to take up to 12 weeks off to recover enough before you can return to work.

In most cases it may help you to phase your return back to work e.g. for the first few weeks, work mornings only or work 3 days a week instead of 5.

Managing emotional effects of donating a kidney

It is normal to feel quite emotional in the weeks after donating a kidney, however this generally improves after a few weeks. If it does not and you are feeling low or depressed, it is important to tell your GP who can offer you advice and support.

Your follow-up appointments

Your Live Donor Co-ordinator will call you over the first couple of weeks to check that all is well.

You will be seen by the surgeon 2 to 3 weeks after your operation to check how you are doing. At this appointment your wound and blood pressure will be checked, and you will have urine and blood tests so we can monitor your kidney function.

A further appointment will be sent for you to see the Live Donor Co-ordinator at 3 months and again at 12 months, where the same tests will be done again. Write down any questions you may have and bring them with you to your clinic appointments, so we can make sure we answer any concerns you may have.

Before your operation you had many tests to make sure that you could safely donate a kidney. After your operation it is important that you take care of your remaining kidney, therefore we recommend that you have a regular review of your health and kidney function every year. This can be done here at Leicester General Hospital, at your local hospital or at your GP surgery.

If you chose to have this review at your GP surgery it is important that **you** contact them to make an appointment around the anniversary time of your donation surgery, as your GP surgery will not always send a reminder letter.

The tests that need to be carried out annually are:

- your blood pressure.
- your weight.
- a dipstick urine test to check for protein, blood or signs of infection.
- a blood test to check your current kidney function.

The NHS Blood & Transplant (NHSBT) request follow-up information on all patients who have donated a kidney. This is to ensure that the information given to future donors about the long term effects of donating a kidney are up-to-date.

We will forward your results onto NHSBT, or obtain them from your GP to forward onto NHSBT if needed.

Contact details

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact either:

- Live Donor Co-ordinator on 07879 418287 or 0116 258 4117
- Transplant Ward on 0116 258 4126 (ask to speak to the Transplant Surgery Registrar on call who is available 24 hours a day)

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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