

Information for kidney donors when leaving the hospital

Kidney clinic
4th Floor, Tower Wing, Guy's Hospital

This leaflet explains your wound care, pain relief and general recovery after your operation to donate a kidney. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Before you leave the hospital

You should be given the following:

- advice on wound care, and extra dressings to take home if needed
- prescribed pain relief medication, and instructions for safe use
- a medical certificate to cover the period of your stay in hospital
- a four week follow-up appointment in the surgical outpatients department
- a copy of your hospital discharge letter – another copy is sent to your GP.

Transport home

You are normally discharged from the ward before 12 noon. The nursing staff can plan in advance with you when this will most likely happen.

Where possible, we suggest a relative or friend pick you up from the ward. However, please note that parking spaces immediately in front of the hospital are limited to a one-hour stay. There is a long-stay NCP car park at the junction of Snowsfield and Kipling Streets, about a five minute walk from the hospital. Charges are displayed at the entrance.

Alternatively, you may prefer to travel home by train, underground (tube), bus or taxi. You will be able to travel home using public transport as long as you are accompanied and have someone to help carry your luggage for you.

If none of these options are available to you, please ask the ward nurses to arrange hospital transport. If you decide to take hospital transport home, unfortunately your friends or family cannot travel with you.

If you have any questions about your discharge home, please do not hesitate to contact the living donor team during normal office hours (see page 3 for details).

After I leave the hospital

You will not be reviewed in clinic as regularly as the person who has received your kidney (recipient). Do not worry about this. Although you have undergone major surgery, your recovery is much quicker as you do not have an underlying chronic disease as the recipients do.

You may also experience a mixture of feelings at this time, which is perfectly normal. You can call the living donor co-ordinators at any stage to discuss any aspect of your recovery. Their contact details are provided on page three of this leaflet.

Medical certificate

You should have been given an inpatient hospital medical certificate. If this was not given to you before you left the ward, please contact the ward clerk on **t:** 020 7188 8817 (Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays). They will arrange for a medical certificate to be sent to you in the post. Your GP can give you a further medical certificate (Med3) if needed.

Surgical review appointment

Before you leave you should have already been given an appointment to see a surgeon four weeks after your discharge from hospital. If an appointment has not been arranged for you by the time you leave hospital, please contact the living donor administration team on the number provided on page 3 to book your surgical follow up appointment.

Looking after my wound

It is important for the nurses on the ward to check your wound before you leave hospital and to offer you advice on caring for your wound. We advise the following when caring for your wound at home:

- Avoid having a bath until the wound is completely healed – this usually takes two to three weeks.
- You may shower normally after you have removed the old dressing. Do not use soap around the wound and only wash the wound area with water from the shower. Pat your wound dry with a clean towel and put on a new dressing.
- Please always remember to wash your hands before touching the dressing or wound.
- Please follow advice from the ward about whether or not to cover your wound after you are discharged from hospital. If there is a dressing in place and it becomes stained, wet, or the wound oozes through, please change it.

If you would like support from your GP practice nurse to help care for your wound, please arrange this directly with the GP surgery.

Will I be in pain?

It is completely normal to experience some pain and discomfort from your wound when you leave hospital. The nurses on the ward will give you advice on pain relief, and supply you with enough pain relief medications when you leave hospital. It is important that you take your painkillers on a regular basis for the first few days. Taking the medicine regularly will keep it at a constant level in your body, so will control your pain better. After a few days, you can gradually reduce your medicine until you do not need it any longer.

Please contact the hospital or your GP if you find the pain difficult to control. Always follow the instructions on the packet and never take more than the recommended dose. If you find that you are in more pain at any stage of your recovery, or if you would like further advice on pain control, please contact us on the numbers on the page 3 of this leaflet.

When can I return to my normal activities?

Do not lift anything heavy, such as a bag of shopping or a vacuum cleaner for up to **three months** after the operation. If your job involves heavy lifting or manual labour, you may need extra time off work. This is because sudden increase in abdominal pressure (from lifting and strenuous activity) can make your wound more painful. It can also cause your wound to open up, and cause a hernia to form. A hernia occurs when an internal part of the body, such as an organ, pushes through a weakness in the muscle or surrounding tissue. This would need to be corrected with surgery.

Introduce exercise gradually. Start with short walks, but increase the distance each day. You are encouraged to walk regularly and exercise soon after your discharge from hospital. This will prevent complications such as blood clots, chest infections and muscle wasting.

Driving may be considered at 3 weeks after surgery, as long as you can do an emergency stop. Please check with your insurance company as your policy may have specific guidance or conditions about surgery. If you are taking painkillers please check with a pharmacist whether it is safe for you to drive. If you are not sure about when to resume driving, please visit your GP to check your progress.

Your appetite and bowel function will take one to two weeks to return to normal. However, if you have any worries, please contact us and we will answer all your queries.

What should I do if I have a problem or have any questions?

If you are unwell, have any queries, or experience any of the symptoms listed below after you are discharged from hospital, please contact your living donor co-ordinator.

- Increased pain to wound area.
- Excessive discharge from wound.
- Fever.
- Discomfort or burning during urination.
- Increased frequency of urination.
- Cloudy urine, or urine with an unusual smell.

Contact us

The living donor co-ordinators work Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. During these hours you can contact them via the living donor administration team on **t: 020 7188 3777**.

If you have an urgent query regarding your wound outside office hours (weekends, bank holidays and evenings), please contact Richard Bright Ward on **t: 020 7188 8817** and ask to be put through to the surgical registrar on call.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets**

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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A list of sources is available on request