

# Questions to ask your surgeon/ clinician prior to surgery

Here is a list of questions that you might like to ask your surgeon, clinician, or hospital team before you have your surgery:

1. Can you confirm yet whether I have kidney cancer, a cyst, or a benign tumour on my kidney?
2. Is the cancer (tumour) in one kidney or both kidneys? Is it the left or the right kidney?
3. Do you know yet what type of kidney cancer I may have? For example, clear cell or papillary etc.
4. What exactly do my scans show? Has the tumour spread into the fatty tissue or nearby lymph nodes (this is called locally advanced kidney cancer) or is it contained within the kidney capsule?
5. Can you tell me yet whether the cancer has spread outside of my kidney to any other parts of my body i.e. my lungs, liver, bones or lymph glands (this would be called advanced or metastatic kidney cancer) or is it contained within the kidney capsule?
6. What is the size of the tumour on my kidney? Will you need to remove all my kidney (a radical nephrectomy) or just part of it (nephron sparing or partial nephrectomy)?
7. Do you intend to remove my adrenal gland? If so, why is this?
8. Will you remove any lymph glands/nodes to check if cancer is present? If not, why not?
9. Will I need a biopsy taken or any additional tests before surgery? If so, what kind of tests and when/where will they take place? How long will I wait for the results of any new tests?
10. Will I need surgery to remove my kidney and the tumour (this operation is called a nephrectomy)? If so:
  - Can this be done by keyhole surgery (this is called laparoscopic surgery)?
  - When will I have my pre-operation check?
  - What date will the surgery take place?
  - Will the hospital screen me for MRSA prior to the operation?
  - Is the operation a complicated one?
  - Who will carry out the operation? Will it be you or member of your team?
  - How long will I be in the operating theatre?
  - What are the potential complications of this type of surgery?
  - What happens immediately after the operation? What after-effects will I suffer?
  - How long will I have to stay in hospital?
  - How long will I be off work or unable to work?
  - How long will it be before I can get back to normal?
11. If you do not intend to remove the tumour, please explain to me why not and what treatment will I have instead of surgery?
12. How much experience do you/your team have of treating kidney cancer? Do I need to get a second opinion from a kidney cancer specialist at a cancer centre?
13. Are there any other alternatives to surgery at this stage? Is surgery the only/best option? And could you explain any other options to me please?
14. What is the most effective way of treating kidney cancer if it has spread to other parts of the body?

15. How long after my operation will it take before I receive a copy the pathology report telling me what type of kidney cancer has been found? And the stage and grade of the cancer, and other details
16. Will I need more treatment after my surgery? What will it be, when will it start, how long will it last, and what outcome can I expect?
17. If I need drug treatment, will it have side effects, and if so, is there any way of relieving them? Will I automatically get an appointment with an oncologist?
18. Is there anything you or I can do to prevent the spread of kidney cancer to other parts of my body? Can I have more surgery if the cancer spreads to a new place?
19. Will radiotherapy or chemotherapy be effective for my type of kidney cancer?
20. Are there any clinical trials involving new approaches to the management of kidney cancer that might help me? Who can talk to me about kidney cancer clinical trials?
21. Who do I contact if I have any queries about my treatment or if I get any new symptoms? Can I have a name and telephone number of the Urology Clinical Nurse Specialist please (or CNS for short)?
22. What is the recommended follow-up/surveillance routine following my kidney cancer surgery? When will I have another CT scan? How often will I have CT scans and/or medical check-ups?
23. How soon after my surgery will I come back to see you for my follow up appointment to get the results of the tumour pathology and to help me with any problems I may have?
24. Do you have any leaflets or information about kidney cancer I can take away with me to read?
25. Is there a local kidney cancer support group I can join?

We always recommend patients, carers and families read the most up-to-date patient information and support booklet about kidney cancer from Macmillan Cancer Support:

[Understanding Kidney Cancer, Macmillan Cancer Support](#)

### **Please help other patients:**

Please keep us updated with useful information that will help other cancer patients. You can email us with your tips so we can regularly add to this resource. Please email us at: [support@actionkidneycancer.org](mailto:support@actionkidneycancer.org) or visit our website [www.actionkidneycancer.org](http://www.actionkidneycancer.org)

This Help Sheet was written by Rose, a kidney cancer patient, in May 2016.

Thanks to our community for their input, and especially to Rose for her patience and willingness to collate this information to help and support others.

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