

ADRENAL SURGERY

Why do I need an Adrenalectomy?

Your surgeon may recommend adrenalectomy to treat or diagnose an adrenal tumor. Some common indications for surgery are large or symptomatic adrenal tumors, malignancy, concern for malignancy and adrenal tumors that over secrete hormones that can cause harm in the short or long-term. Please discuss adrenal surgery, risks, benefits and alternative treatment, if any, with your surgeon.

How do I get ready for Adrenal Surgery?

Before the procedure, your surgeon may order bloodwork, x-rays or other tests. **Discuss the plan to hold or continue blood thinning medications** with your surgeon before surgery. The night before your surgery, you should have nothing to eat or drink after midnight. If you are on daily medications, take them with a sip of water the morning of your operation, but do not have coffee, tea or anything else to eat or drink.

What happens to me during the operation?

The anesthesia doctor will meet and talk with you the morning of surgery. In the operating room, you will receive a relaxing medication through an intravenous line and then you will be placed asleep under general anesthesia.

Adrenalectomy can be performed as an open or laparoscopic (small-incision) procedure. You and your surgeon will discuss the recommended approach. Laparoscopic adrenalectomy is performed by making several small incisions in the abdomen and flank, and with video assistance, the surgeon will remove your adrenal gland. There is a possibility of changing to an open adrenalectomy during laparoscopic adrenalectomy. Open adrenalectomy may also be recommended upfront rather than laparoscopic adrenalectomy. Open adrenalectomy may be recommended if there is excessive scar tissue, growth of abnormal adrenal tissue into adjacent organs, bleeding or other findings. Open adrenalectomy is performed by making a large incision (8-12 inches) either up and down the abdomen or as a horizontal incision below your rib cage over your abdomen and flank. A tube may be left in to drain fluids.

What happens after the operation?

If not previously arranged, you should call for an appointment to see your surgeon in the office in 1-2 weeks. Many patients allow for 4-6 weeks off work after the surgery, but you may return to work earlier – as soon as you feel ready. With laparoscopic adrenalectomies, you must not lift > 10 lbs for 2 weeks and open adrenalectomies for 6-8 weeks to avoid hernias. If your employer has a form to be signed, bring it to your first office visit after surgery. You will receive post-operative care instructions.

What are the risks of Adrenal Surgery?

The risks of adrenal surgery include, but are not limited to, infection; bleeding; injury to surrounding structures including liver, kidney, stomach, bowel and nearby vessels; need to convert to open procedure; incisional hernia; formation of blood clots and post-operative adrenal insufficiency requiring steroid therapy. There are also risks of general anesthesia.

ADRENAL SURGERY (continued)

When should I call?

If you have any medical question during business hours (weekdays from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm), you can ask to speak directly to the Endocrine Surgery team at (920) 731-8131. Our phones are answered 24 hours a day, but **after-hour service is for emergencies only**, please. Constipation or loose stools are common after adrenal surgery but are usually not an emergency. For these types of issues, call the office during business hours. If you are discharged with a drain and the site becomes reddened, swollen or the drainage stops, or you have a great change in the amount of drainage, call during office hours. Most incisions develop temporary mild swelling. Mild swelling and bruising are normal and will slowly go away.

Please do call promptly if you have severe nausea, persistent vomiting or fever above 101 degrees (take your temperature with a thermometer first); severe/increasing abdominal pain or the inability to eat or drink; an incision/wound that becomes red, swollen or develops foul or thick drainage or starts to open. For any life-threatening medical emergency, call 911 and go to the nearest emergency room.