

Informed Consent

Nephrectomy (Removal of a Kidney)

You have elected to have your pet undergo a surgical procedure called a nephrectomy, where one of the kidneys is removed. Usually nephrectomy is recommended when there is a mass or tumor present within the kidney, or if the kidney has been damaged by some disease process or trauma affecting the urine flow or blood supply. The prognosis with surgery is generally very good. However, complications occur in about 15% of patients. Below, general risks of abdominal surgery are outlined, followed by those specific to nephrectomy. Let us know if you have any questions or concerns.

Abdominal Surgery Risks

Skin incision infection- this is a risk with any surgery, and usually treatable with oral antibiotic therapy

Damage to abdominal structures- this could cause bleeding, or contamination by contents of the intestines

Adhesion formation (scar tissue formation in the abdomen)- scar tissue can impact the tissues in the abdomen in the future

Peritonitis- this is a rare but serious infection within the abdomen. If this occurs, additional therapies will likely be recommended.

Abdominal wall dehiscence (opening)- this can occur when the incision line used to close the abdominal wall fails. At first, the abdominal contents may stay covered by skin and subcutaneous tissue. However, once the abdominal incision fails, surgical revision is recommended. If the abdominal contents become exposed, emergency intervention is required.

Abdominal foreign body- very rarely, sponges or even instruments can be left in the abdominal cavity during surgery. We take precautions to ensure this doesn't happen, but it is possible.

Nephrectomy

Leakage from the ureter insertion site (dehiscence)- the ureter (the tube between the kidney and the bladder) is usually removed at the urinary bladder. If this site leaks, the urine ends up in the abdomen and that causes irritation and infection. Revision surgery is recommended.

Hemorrhage (bleeding)/ damage to adjacent blood vessels- the artery and vein of the kidney (renal artery and vein) are very close to the main artery and vein in the abdomen and violation or leakage from any of these vessels, though rare, could cause life-threatening hemorrhage.

Recurrence of tumor- if the underlying cause was some type of tumor, we remove as much as possible and/or what we can see and feel. We cannot, however, see or feel tumor cells and there could be cells that remain that could spread after surgery, causing a recurrence.

Unhealthy remaining kidney- if one kidney is removed, we have to rely on the other kidney exclusively. If that kidney happens to become diseased or damaged, that would be life threatening without further intervention.

Urinary tract infection- this can occur with any urinary tract surgery and may require antibiotics

Hemorrhage (bleeding) and hematuria (bloody urine)- is common and can be profuse, but is generally a short-term issue and rarely life threatening