



## **What to Expect After Thyroid or Parathyroid Surgery**

### **Recovery**

Most patients will be eating, drinking, and walking around the night of their surgery. Typically, there is not a lot of pain involved with thyroid and parathyroid surgery. Rarely narcotic pain medication will be required, but it will be available to you if needed. Most patients only need acetaminophen (Tylenol) for discomfort.

### **Incision**

The incision is closed with dissolvable sutures internally and you will not be able to see them. On the outside, the incision will also be closed with surgical glue. The glue will usually stay on for 1-2 weeks. You can wash over it gently but do not scrub.

### **Swelling**

The incision will be slightly raised and there may be swelling and light bruising at the incision site. This is normal for several weeks after surgery and will resolve over time. You may also feel a sensation of swelling or firmness that will also resolve over time.

### **Numbness**

It is normal to experience numbness under your chin after surgery, especially around the incision. This will get better over time. However, if you feel numbness and tingling around your mouth or in your fingertips or toes call our office.

### **Incision Scar**

You may feel firmness directly over the incision. This is normal and will soften and go away when healing is complete usually in 3-6 months. All incisions are sensitive to sunlight. The ultraviolet light of the sun and tanning booths will darken the scar area in the first year. Always use sunscreen.

### **Showering**

You may shower the day after surgery. Try not to totally saturate the incision. You should not go swimming or soak in a tub or hot tub for at least a week.

### **Diet/Swallowing**

You may eat whatever you choose. You may prefer softer foods and liquids initially if you have a sore throat. Advance your diet as you see fit. Some patients experience minor changes in swallowing that improve over time. You may feel there is a lump in your throat when you swallow. This sensation will decrease with time.

### **Sore Throat/Cough**

This is normal to experience after surgery and will often last up to 5 days after surgery. Lozenges and a softer diet may be helpful until this resolves. You may also feel like you have phlegm in your throat and need to cough. This is due to the irritation of the tube in your windpipe during surgery and should clear up in 4-5 days.

### **Voice**

Your voice may be hoarse or weak at first because the surgery took place near the voice box but usually recovers within weeks. Some patients also notice a change in the pitch of their voices that affects singing. Rarely these changes are permanent.

## **Neck Stiffness**

You may experience stiffness/soreness in your neck, shoulder, or back and may experience tension headaches. These may take a few days or weeks to go away completely. You should not drive until you can comfortably turn your head from side to side. It is a good idea to gently perform neck exercises to help keep it from getting stiff looking side to side, up and down or moving your head in a small circle. You may apply a warm compress or heating pad to your shoulder and back to alleviate stiffness.

## **Pain Management at Home**

Take NSAIDS like ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil), naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) for the first 3-5 days as needed. Take medication as directed on the medication container. To prevent acetaminophen overdose, do not take acetaminophen if you are prescribed a narcotic because this also contains acetaminophen. If you take any narcotic - DO NOT drive a car or drink alcohol.

## **Back to Normal Activities**

Most patients return to their daily activities in a few days and work in about a week, with some limitations. Strenuous activity and heavy lifting should be avoided for at least two weeks.

## **New Medications**

### **Calcium Supplement**

Your body's blood calcium level may fall after a total thyroidectomy or parathyroidectomy. The parathyroid glands that regulate your blood calcium levels may not function properly after surgery. This is common and usually temporary. You will receive specific instructions on hospital discharge on how much calcium you need to take. Symptoms of a too low calcium level include numbness and tingling in your hands, feet, and around your lips. Some patients experience muscle cramps. Some brands of calcium carbonate are Os-Cal 500 and TUMS. Vitamin D may also be recommended.

### **Thyroid Hormone**

If both sides of your thyroid were removed, you may be prescribed a thyroid hormone replacement called Synthroid (levothyroxine is a generic form). You must take this medication every day on an empty stomach. Take in AM when you first get up and wait to eat anything for 30 minutes to one hour. A blood test will be done in 6-8 weeks to ensure the dosage is correct.

### **When to Notify Our Office**

You should call our office at (817) 540-3121 if you experience the following symptoms:

- Fever with a temperature higher than 101.5.
- Difficulty swallowing
- Increase in pain at the incision that is not relieved by pain medication
- Increased swelling, redness, or drainage from the incision
- Numbness or tingling of fingers, toes, or around the mouth.
- Muscle cramps

### **Follow-Up Visit**

Your post-operative appointment will be scheduled for 1 or 2 weeks after your surgery. Please call (817) 540-3121 to make your appointment.