

## **Post-Operative Instructions after Thyroidectomy or Parathyroidectomy**

1. It is OK to take a shower one day after surgery since skin glue is being used to cover your incision. Do not allow excessive water to pour over the incision or immerse incision in water.
2. No heavy lifting and no vigorous exercise until cleared by your surgeon.
3. Obtain all medications and use as directed.
  - You may need antibiotics.
  - Take pain medication as prescribed. It is OK to substitute Tylenol if the pain medication is too strong or causes nausea. We do not want you to take ibuprofen for two weeks.
  - Constipation is a common side effect of pain medications. Take a mild over-the-counter laxative if using the narcotic pain medicine. Avoid straining with bowel movements.
  - Follow-up with your primary care doctor or endocrinologist one month after surgery to determine your need for thyroid replacement medication (for thyroidectomy patients). If you had your thyroid completely removed and you are placed on thyroid medication, this medication should be taken on an empty stomach (1 hour before your meal or 2 hours after your meal). Do not take this medication at the same time as an anti-acid or calcium supplementation.
4. Take all of your routine medications as prescribed, unless instructed otherwise by your surgeon. Any medications which thin the blood should be avoided (e.g., aspirin, Advil, Motrin, ibuprofen, Excedrin, Aleve, Naproxen) for the first 2 weeks after surgery.
5. Calcium supplementation is commonly given after thyroid or parathyroid surgery because calcium levels may drop after these surgeries. Take the medication as prescribed and your doctor will guide you on tapering the medication after surgery. If your calcium levels drop, the first symptoms noticed are numbness and tingling around the mouth and fingertips. Muscle cramps or spasms may occur, and in very severe cases, seizures. Notify your surgeon if you start to experience any of these symptoms.
6. There are no diet restrictions. Tobacco use is not recommended since nicotine decreases blood flow to the healing tissues and can compromise wound healing.

7. You may have a drain placed. If so, the nurses will teach you how to take care of it before discharge. You will typically be seen back in the office a few days after discharge for drain removal; if you have no drain, you will usually be seen back in the office 7 to 10 days after surgery to examine the incision and review pathology results.

## When to call your doctor

1. Symptoms of low calcium:
  - Numbness/ Tingling of your hands and/or feet
  - Numbness around your lips
  - Muscle cramps in the back and legs, may lead to spasms
  - Fatigue, Irritability
  - Wheezing
  - Trouble swallowing
  - In severe cases, you may experience seizures or other uncontrolled movements.
2. Fever over 101.5 degrees F.
3. Foul smelling discharge from your incision.
4. More than expected swelling of your neck.
5. Increase warmth or redness around the incision.
6. Pain that continues to increase instead of decrease.
7. Problem urinating.

If you are experiencing bleeding or are having difficulties breathing, **you need to go directly to the emergency room without calling.**