

Thyroidectomy Postoperative Instructions

Diet: You may have liquids by mouth once you have awakened from anesthesia. If you tolerate the liquids without significant nausea or vomiting then you may take solid foods without restrictions. Generally, patients experience a mild sore throat for 2-3 days following head and neck surgery. This usually does not interfere with swallowing.

Pain Control: Patients report mild to moderate neck pain for several days following most neck surgeries. This is usually well controlled with prescription strength oral pain medications. You should avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen (Excedrin, Motrin, Naprosyn, Advil) because these drugs are mild blood thinners and will increase your chances of having a post-operative bleed into the neck tissues or neck wound. To relieve pain you may take either regular Tylenol 325mg two tablets every 3-4 hours or Tylenol #3 as prescribed.

Calcium supplement:

If you had a *total thyroidectomy* (removal of both sides of the thyroid), take the following:

- 1) Tums Ultra strength 1000, 2 tablets 4 times a day for 7 days. This acts as a calcium supplement.
- 2) Rocaltrol (calcitrol) 0.5 micrograms, 2 pill a day, for 7days. You will be given a prescription for this. If you experience numbness or tingling in your fingers, hands, or toes, this means that your calcium level is probably a little low. Call the office if this should occur and you will be instructed to increase both your calcium intake and the calcitrol.

If you only had a *thyroid lobectomy* (removal of one side), there is no need to take additional calcium.

Activity: Sleep with the head elevated for the first 48 hours. You may use an extra pillow to keep the head slightly flexed. No heavy lifting or exercise for 3 weeks following the surgery. You should plan for a minimum of 1 week away from work. If your job requires manual labor, lifting or straining then you should be out of work for a minimum of 2 weeks.

Wound Care: The neck will likely have special adhesive tape stickers that your surgeon will remove during your post-operative visit. Mild redness and swelling around the wound is normal and will decrease over time following surgery. You may shower with your back facing the shower head, but try not to allow the wound to get wet 48 hours following the surgery. Do not scrub or manipulate the wound for 7 days. Do not soak the wound in a bath tub. Pat dry, don't rub it with a towel.

Follow-up Appointment: Your follow-up appointment in the office will be approximately 1 week following your surgery. This visit should be scheduled prior to your surgery (at the time of your pre-operative visit). If you do not have the appointment made, please contact our office when you arrive home. At the post-operative visit, your steri-strips and sutures are removed and the pathology report is reviewed with you.

PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY IF YOU EXPERIENCE:

- **DIFFICULTY BREATHING OR INABILITY TO SWALLOW**
- **NUMBNESS OR TINGLING IN YOUR FINGERTIPS OR LIPS**
- **ACTIVE BLEEDING FROM THE WOUND**
- **FEVER GREATER THAN 101.5 DEGREES**
- **PURULENT DISCHARGE (PUS) COMING FROM THE WOUND**