

Home Care after Thyroidectomy

What to Expect

After surgery you can expect to have an incision and a drainage tube at the base of your neck. The drainage may look blood-tinged to yellowish straw-colored. The drainage tube may be removed the next day. You may continue to have drainage from the drain site for the next day or two.

You may have some pain after surgery. For relief, use your pain medicine as ordered. Although you should be able to eat and drink as usual, swallowing may be uncomfortable. You may want to take your pain medicine 30 minutes before eating to help reduce the pain.

You should take about 1 week off work. Restrict your activities for about 1 week. Avoid strenuous physical exercise such as jogging, aerobics, swimming, or lifting over 10-20 pounds.

Keep your head raised while sleeping by using 2-3 pillows for 1 week.

Complications

In about 1 in 300 thyroid surgeries, the parathyroid glands will not work as a result of the surgery. These four delicate glands are attached to the thyroid. The parathyroid glands control calcium levels. When these glands don't work, calcium levels are lowered. Some patients may need calcium supplements on a temporary basis. In some cases, calcium and vitamin D may be needed on a permanent basis.

Also, there are two main laryngeal nerves, the superior laryngeal nerve, which has an internal branch and an external branch, and the recurrent laryngeal nerve, which controls movement of the vocal cords, in some cases these nerves can be damaged causing hoarseness. The rate of permanent vocal cord paralysis is very low, statistics report 1-3%

When to Call the Doctor

If you have trouble breathing, go to the nearest Emergency Room.

Call the doctor if any of the following occur:

- *Coughing when swallowing liquids or solids*
- *Signs and symptoms of infection*
 - *Redness*
 - *Fever over 100.4° F by mouth for 24 hours.*
 - *Swelling, tenderness, warmth at the site*
 - *Pus-like drainage*
- *Signs and symptoms of low blood calcium*
 - *Numbness or tingling on your face or lips*
 - *Facial paralysis*

Phone Numbers

If you have any questions or problems once you are home, please call:

ENT Center of Austin, Monday - Friday from 8:00 to 4:30 at (512)328.7722 ext 307

After hours, nights and weekends, please call the office and the doctor will be paged, also call Renea at 512.745.4874 – she can get a hold of the doctors immediately