

THYROIDECTOMY PATIENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. Your surgeon will remove either one half or your entire thyroid based on the problem you are having. If one half is removed, you will most likely stay overnight and be discharged from the hospital in the morning. If the entire gland is removed, you will be in the hospital for 3 to 5 days to monitor your calcium levels. More on this below.
2. You will have a rubber drain coming out of the incision to prevent fluid from building up. It will be removed prior to leaving the hospital.
3. Your incision will be closed with either nylon or dissolvable sutures. If dissolvable sutures are used, they will be covered with butterfly strips. If there are no butterfly strips, clean your incision with hydrogen peroxide and apply antibiotic ointment on it twice a day. Keep the incision area dry for 48 hours. You may then bathe and allow water to run over the incision. Pat it dry gently.
4. No strenuous activity for heavy lifting for one week. Your surgeon will then allow a gradual increase in your activity level. Do not be surprised if you are a little for fatigued for the first couple of weeks after surgery.
5. Your neck may be tight and your neck area numb after surgery. This is temporary and will resolve in a few weeks.
6. Take the pain medications and/or antibiotics as directed by your surgeon.

COMPLICATIONS:

- **Fever** or infection is not common. Notify your surgeon with a temperature above 101.5°F.
- It is possible for **fluid to build up** under the incision. Notify your surgeon if you notice swelling, redness, increased pain or difficulty breathing.
- If your entire thyroid is removed, you will need **thyroid replacement medication** and you will be told when to start it. If one half is removed, we will check your thyroid levels after surgery to determine the need for thyroid replacement.
- **Hoarseness** after surgery is uncommon. Damage to the nerve going to the voice box (larynx) can be the cause and is often temporary due to stretching of the nerve during surgery. If the nerve does not return, speech therapy or surgical procedures can be done to improve your voice.
- **Low calcium level** can occur when the entire thyroid is removed. It is usually temporary, but can be permanent, requiring you to take calcium tablets.