

After Your Thyroid Gland Surgery

Dartmouth General Hospital

If you had your whole thyroid gland taken out:

- You will need to take thyroid hormone medication every day for the rest of your life. The dose (amount) may need to be adjusted over time.
 - › We will ask your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or your endocrinologist (a doctor who treats diseases that affect your glands) to do blood work 6 weeks after you start your thyroid hormone medication. They will adjust the dose as needed.

If you had half of your thyroid gland taken out and you still have the other half:

- We will arrange for blood work to check how well your thyroid gland is working in 3 months.
 - › It may take up to 6 weeks to get the test results, depending on the size of your thyroid gland.
 - › If you have not heard from Dartmouth ENT (Ear, Nose, and Throat) 6 weeks after your surgery, please call:
 - › Phone: 902-435-8586

Caring for your incision (cut)

- Keep your incision dry for 3 days.
- After 3 days, you may shower. Gently pat the incision dry. **Do not rub.**
- Use a cotton swab or gauze dipped in a mix of half hydrogen peroxide and half water to clean any dried blood.
- After washing, put on an antibiotic ointment (like Polysporin®) 2 times a day.

If you have Steri-Strips™ (strong pieces of tape) over the incision:

- › They will be removed in about 7 days (1 week), at the same time the stitch is removed.

If you have skin glue over the incision:

- › You may shower right away.
- › You do not need to use antibiotic ointment.
- › The skin glue will slowly peel off after 7 to 14 days (1 to 2 weeks). If you still have skin glue when you come in for your follow-up appointment with your surgeon, we will remove it.
- **For 2 weeks, avoid any activity that pulls across the incision**, like shaving. You may shave the rest of your face.
- The stitch will be taken out about 1 week after surgery at your follow-up appointment with your surgeon.

Pain

- You may have mild to moderate pain for the first 24 to 48 hours (1 to 2 days) after your surgery. It usually gets better after 2 days.
- Throat lozenges are best to help with pain.
- You may get a prescription for pain medication (Tramacet®). This will depend on how much pain you have.
 - › **Only use Tramacet® when you need it.** It may make you feel dizzy and nauseous (upset stomach).
 - › If you use Tramacet® for a few days, it can cause constipation (not being able to poop).
 - › As your pain gets better, use extra strength acetaminophen (Tylenol® Extra Strength) instead of Tramacet®.

Sleeping

The skin above your incision may look swollen after lying down for a few hours.

To help lower swelling:

- › Raise the head of your bed 30 to 45 degrees or sleep in a recliner for 3 to 4 days after your surgery.
- › Use an ice pack on your neck for 10 minutes on and 10 minutes off, as needed.

Activity

For 2 weeks after your surgery:

- **Do not** strain.
- **Do not** lift anything heavier than 10 pounds.
- **Do not** do any vigorous (hard) exercise (like shoveling, mowing the lawn, or vacuuming).

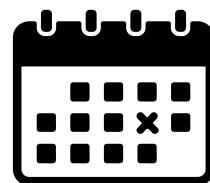
Eating

- You may go back to your usual eating habits after your surgery.

If you have any questions, please call your surgeon. We are here to help.

Follow-up appointment

- If you have stitches, you may need to have them taken out 7 to 10 days after your surgery. If you have not been given an appointment, please call Dartmouth ENT:
 - › Phone: 902-435-8586



- Stitches that dissolve (go away on their own) **do not** need to be removed unless they get infected (see symptoms on the next page).

Call your surgeon or your primary health care provider if you have any of these symptoms:

- › Fever (temperature above 38 °C or 100.4 °F)
- › Bad-smelling discharge from your incision
- › More warmth or redness around your incision
- › A lot of bleeding
- › Trouble peeing
- › Pain that gets worse instead of better
- › Choking or coughing when you eat or drink

If you cannot reach them, call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.

Calling your surgeon

If it is not urgent, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., call:

- Dr. Balys
 - › Phone : 902-435-8589
- Dr. LeBlanc
 - › Phone : 902-435-8586
- Dr. Taylor
 - › Phone : 902-473-5752
- Dr. Piccott
 - › Phone: 902-435-8690

If you cannot reach your surgeon, or if it is after 4 p.m. or on a weekend, call Hospital Locating:

- › Phone: 902-473-2222
- › Ask the operator to page the ENT surgeon on call.

Low blood calcium

- Symptoms of low blood calcium include:
 - › Numbness or tingling around your mouth and/or in your fingers or toes
 - › Muscle cramping and/or curling of your fingers or toes
- **If your blood calcium gets too low, you could have seizures or your heart could stop. This is serious and may be life-threatening.**
- **If you have any of these symptoms** and you have a prescription for Rocaltrol® and calcium tablets, follow these instructions:
 1. Chew 2 calcium tablets and drink a glass of water.
 2. Wait for 20 minutes.
 3. If you still feel tingling or numbness in your fingers or toes, or in the tip of your nose, chew 2 more calcium tablets and drink another glass of water.
 4. Wait for 20 more minutes.
 5. **If you still have symptoms, chew 2 more calcium tablets and go to the nearest Emergency Department right away.**
- **You must have your blood calcium level checked right away.**
 - › **Do not** drive yourself. Have someone drive you to the nearest Emergency Department.
 - › When you arrive, tell staff to check your calcium level and to call your surgeon.
- **Bring this pamphlet with you to the Emergency Department.**

Neck swelling or breathing problems

- If you have more swelling in your neck with voice or breathing problems, **call 911 or go to the nearest Emergency Department right away. This can be a sign of bleeding under the skin and must be treated right away.**
 - › **Do not** drive yourself.
 - › When you come to the Emergency Department, **make sure they call the ENT doctor on call.**
- **Bring this pamphlet with you to the Emergency Department.**

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find all patient education resources here:
www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Prepared by: ENT Surgery, Dartmouth General Hospital
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