



Patient & Family Guide
2019

Thyroid Gland and Parathyroid Gland Surgery

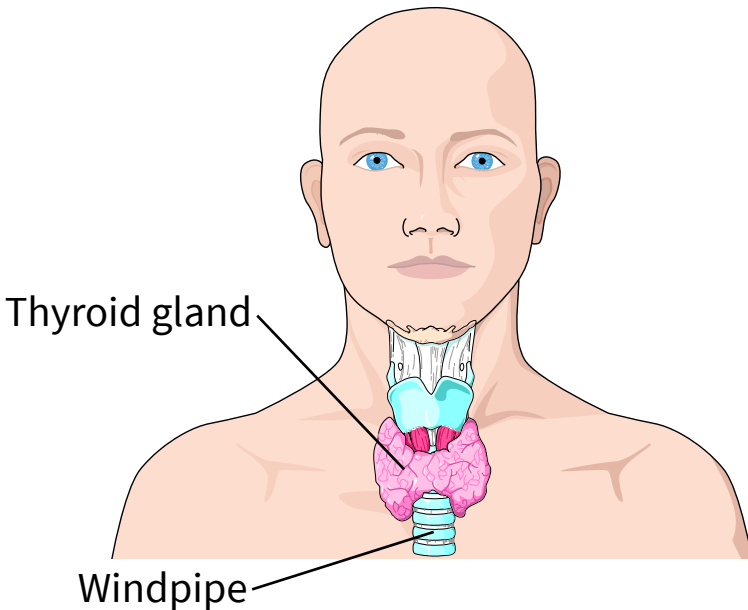


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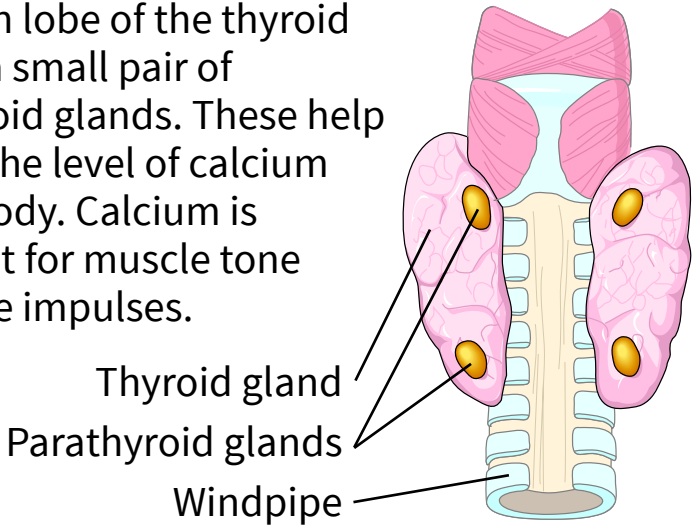
Thyroid Gland and Parathyroid Gland Surgery

Where are the thyroid and parathyroid glands and what do they do?

- The thyroid gland is just below your voice box at the base of your throat. This butterfly-shaped gland has two lobes (sides). The lobes lie on each side of your windpipe.
- The thyroid gland can cause problems if it is too active or not active enough. This gland makes a hormone that is very important in controlling the activity of many cells in your body.



Near each lobe of the thyroid gland is a small pair of parathyroid glands. These help balance the level of calcium in your body. Calcium is important for muscle tone and nerve impulses.



(This view is from the back of the neck)

What is my surgery called?

Hemi Thyroidectomy – This is the removal of half of the thyroid gland.

Total Thyroidectomy – This is the removal of the whole thyroid gland.

Parathyroidectomy – This is the removal of some or all of the parathyroid glands.

After surgery

Controlling discomfort

- You may have side effects from being sedated (put to sleep). These may include nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), sore throat, or feeling like you are in a dream. There are medicines to help you with some of these side effects. Ask your nurse about these medicines.
- Some of the very small muscles in your neck may have been cut. When you are getting up, place your hands together behind your neck for support. This will protect your neck muscles from strain.
- Your muscles may be tense and you may not be able to move your shoulders normally. This will cause more soreness. The nurse or physiotherapist may give you some exercises to try to prevent stiffness.

Meals

- Eating healthy food will help your incision (cut) to heal.
- You may want to eat foods that are easier to swallow while your throat is sore.
- Follow any special diet that your dietitian gives you.

Activity

- You can get up and out of bed shortly after your surgery.
- Gentle deep breathing and coughing will help prevent infection in your lungs.
- Walk as much as you can.
- Add to your activity every day. For example, add 5 minutes of walking each day.
- Go back to driving when you can turn your head easily.
- **Do not lift more than 5 pounds for 2 weeks. This includes children.**
- You can have sex again when you feel well enough (not for the first week).

When should I call my nurse?

Call your nurse if you have:

- › wheezing (trouble breathing)
- › muscle cramps or spasms
- › tingling in your fingers or around your mouth

Will I need blood work after my surgery?

Your doctor may want your blood checked for calcium levels after surgery. This may need to be checked more than once. You may be given an injection of calcium or calcium pill if your calcium level is too low.

How do I care for my incision (cut)?

- You may have a small drain (tube) in your incision. This drain will remove any blood or fluid that collects. It will be taken out 1-2 days after surgery.
- Your incision may have been closed with stitches that absorb (go away on their own). These do not need to be removed. If your stitches are not absorbable, they will need to be removed at your followup appointment or by your family doctor. You may also have tape over the skin called Steri-Strips™ (see below).
- **After your surgery, do not get the incision wet for 2 days.** After 2 days, you may get the area wet when showering or bathing. Pat the incision dry; **do not rub.**

If you have Steri-Strips™:

- The edges of the Steri-Strips™ will start to curl up after about 5-7 days.
- After 7 days, you can take the Steri-Strips™ off by pulling from the edges.
- Once the Steri-Strips™ are removed, wash the area twice a day. After each wash, put Polysporin® ointment on the incision until your followup visit with the doctor.

- Swelling around the incision is normal. This can last for several weeks after surgery. Most swelling should get better about 1-2 weeks after surgery.
- The incision tends to look the worst between 2-6 weeks after surgery. The swelling and redness will get better over time. It will take about 3-6 months for the incision to heal completely. Keep the incision out of direct sunlight for 1 year by covering the area with clothing or using a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.

What medicines will I need after my surgery?

- If you had half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of your thyroid gland removed, you may be sent home with pain pills. It is unlikely that you will need thyroid replacement medicine. However, you should check with your family doctor about 6 weeks after surgery. No other medicines are usually needed.
- If you had your whole thyroid gland removed, you will be sent home with thyroid replacement medicine. This is usually a pill called Synthroid®. Your family doctor will check how your thyroid is working about 6 weeks after surgery to decide if you are taking the right amount.

Will I need to take calcium after my surgery?

- If you had your whole thyroid gland and/or your parathyroid glands removed, you may have to take calcium pills when you go home. You may also need a medicine called calcitriol (Rocaltrol®). This is a form of Vitamin D and will help increase your calcium.
- Your doctor will adjust the doses of these medications based on your calcium levels. You may need to have your calcium levels checked regularly after surgery. This is to make sure that you are getting the right amount of calcium and/or calcitriol.
- Calcium levels usually go back to normal a few weeks or months after surgery.
- It is important to take the amount of calcium and/or calcitriol as told by your doctor. Your calcium levels can drop quickly if you do not take these pills regularly.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if you have any of the following symptoms of low calcium:

- › tingling or numbness in your hands or feet
- › numbness around your mouth

Ask staff to check your ionized calcium level **BEFORE** giving you any calcium medicine.

Emergency Department staff should contact the ENT resident on call if your calcium levels are low.

Note: If your surgery was done by General Surgery, the General Surgery resident on call should be contacted.

When will I need to see the doctor?

- Keep your followup appointment with your surgeon.
- It is important to visit your family health care provider regularly to check your hormone levels. You will also need regular blood tests.

Biopsy

- A doctor with special training will do a biopsy on the gland(s) that was removed. This means that they will study a sample of the tissue under a microscope in the lab.
- It may be 5-7 days after surgery before the results are ready. This waiting period is not easy. Your doctor will share the results with you and your family as soon as possible. If you need more treatment, your doctor will talk with you about it at this time.

When should I call my surgeon?

Call your surgeon if you have:

- › muscle spasms or cramps
- › fever (over 38°C/100.4°F)
- › drainage from your incision

If you cannot reach your surgeon or family health care provider, go to the nearest Emergency Department.

What are your questions?

Please ask. We are here to help you.

