



Ear, Nose & Throat Consultants of Nevada
Phone: (702) 792-6700 Fax: (702) 792-7198

Total Thyroidectomy Postoperative Care Instructions

The thyroid gland produces a hormone that is important for metabolism and growth. Thyroidectomy is performed to treat thyroid cancer, noncancerous enlargement of the thyroid (goiter) and overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism). It might also be recommended for suspicious thyroid nodules that cannot be determined as cancerous or noncancerous after a needle biopsy.

Wound care: Your wound is covered with Steri Strips. Steri Strips are thin adhesive strips which are placed over an incision to help it heal. Keep the Steri Strips dry for the first 24 hours; then you may gently cleanse the area daily with mild soap and water. You should avoid scrubbing or scratching the incision site. Leave them in place until they fall off on their own or your provider tells you to remove them. They will usually fall off the skin within 10 to 14 days. Try to keep them dry as much as possible to prevent infection. It is normal to have some swelling around the incision, especially above the incision. Some bruising often occurs and can be normal.

Activity: You may resume most of your daily activities, although you should refrain from heavy lifting (greater than 10 lbs) or strenuous activity. You can discuss when you may fully resume your daily exercise/fitness routines at your postoperative follow up appointment. In general, no greater than 10 pounds for the first week, and no heavy lifting or strenuous activity for two weeks.

Diet: You may resume a regular diet, although at first many patients prefer a clear liquid diet like apple juice, Jell-O, or broth. Feel free to advance back to your regular diet as tolerated. Post-surgery, there are no dietary restrictions.

What to expect: You may have a sore throat or a hoarse voice after surgery. You should drink plenty of fluids, and it may be helpful to take throat lozenges to relieve your symptoms. Symptoms may persist for a few days after surgery but generally will improve over time. The sore throat should resolve in a day or two. It can be normal to have some change in the voice which often resolves in 2-3 months.

Shower/bathing: Unless indicated by your surgeon, you should be able to shower or bathe as usual.

Thyroid hormone supplementation: You may be given a prescription for thyroid hormone supplementation (ex. Synthroid, levothyroxine, cytomel, etc.). This medication should be taken on an empty stomach (1 hour before your meal or 2 hours after your meal). Do not take this medication at the same time as an anti-acid or calcium supplementation. Please take your anti-acid or calcium supplementation 1 hour before or 2 hours after your thyroid hormone supplementation.



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Calcium supplementation with Vitamin D: You may be given a instructions to keep your calcium levels in your body adequately supported (calcium carbonate with Calcitriol, calcium citrate with Calcitriol, Caltrate+D, etc.). Please take the medication as prescribed by your surgeon.

The thyroid hormone and your calcium supplementation medication may be adjusted during your postoperative visit depending on your postoperative laboratory evaluations.

Pain: For at least 10 days after surgery, you should refrain from taking any ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), Aleve, aspirin, etc., because these medications may cause bleeding. For pain, you should take Tylenol, or the pain medication provided by your surgical team (unless otherwise directed by your surgeon).

Do not drive, operate dangerous machinery, or do anything dangerous if you are taking narcotic pain medication (such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, morphine, etc.) This medication affects your reflexes and responses, just like alcohol.

Education: For more information on thyroid disorder/disease you may want to visit the American Thyroid Association Website at <http://www.thyroid.org/patient-thyroid-information>. This website is designed to be an educational resource tool and to provide up-to-date information for patients and their families.

Call the Office If You Have...

1. Any concerns. We would much rather that you call your surgeon than worry at home or get into trouble.
2. Symptoms of low calcium:
 - Numbness/ Tingling of your hands and/or feet
 - Numbness around your lips
 - Muscle cramps in the back and legs may lead to spasms.
 - Fatigue, Irritability
 - In severe cases, you may experience seizures or other uncontrolled movements.
3. Fever over 101.5 degrees F.
4. Foul smelling discharge from your incision.
5. More than expected swelling of your neck.
6. Increase warmth or redness around the incision.
7. Pain that continues to increase instead of decrease.
8. Problem urinating.

If you are experiencing bleeding or are having difficulties breathing, **you need to go directly to the emergency room without calling.**

Please note, pathology results are generally not available until 7-10 business days after your procedure. Results will be discussed in the office during your post-op visit.