

## **Parathyroid Surgery**

Parathyroid glands are found near the thyroid. These 4 glands are each the size of a grain of rice. They make a hormone that tells the body how much calcium to store in the bones and how much to have in the blood.

With hyperparathyroidism, a gland or glands can enlarge and send out too much hormone. When this happens, too much calcium is in the blood and not enough is in the bones. This can cause the bones to become weak or may cause kidney stones. The only way to treat this is to remove the abnormal gland(s). Your doctor will talk with you about the benefits and risks of surgery.

### **Surgery**

You will have a small wound in your neck, 1-2 inches long. It will be in the middle of your neck or to the side. During the 1-3 hour surgery you will be under general anesthesia. You will go home the same day, or you may stay in the hospital for one night.

The day of surgery shortly before your operation you may be given an injection in your IV. This helps your surgeon locate the abnormal parathyroid gland with the probe. Once the gland is taken out, we take a small blood sample from your arm or foot to check the parathyroid hormone level. A significant decrease means all abnormal parathyroid tissue is gone.

### **After Surgery**

Your throat may be sore when you swallow. This is normal. This can last 1-2 days. The front or back of your neck may be sore. Some patients feel a pulling in the neck muscles. This will get better in 3-4 weeks. You may feel like you have a lump in your throat when you swallow. This will get

better after a few days but can last up to 6-8 weeks after surgery. Your voice may be hoarse, or you may feel that your voice gets tired.

A mild form of low blood calcium can cause numbness and tingling in your face, lips, fingertips, or toes. If this occurs, you should chew Tums® 2000 mg. Chewable calcium works best as it is absorbed quicker than calcium in a pill form. The numbness and tingling should go away in 30 minutes after you take the Tums®. If it does not go away in 30 minutes chew more Tums® 2000 mg. If the symptoms still do not go away 30 minutes after the second dose of Tums®, please call us.

Calcium and prescription pain pills can be constipating. To prevent this problem, you may want to take a stool softener each day that you use pain pills and until you have your first bowel movement after your surgery. You may want to start with Peri-Colace®. Take Peri-Colace® (docusate sodium 50 mg; sennosides 8.6 mg) two tablets, one to two times a day as needed. Follow the package directions.

### **Pain**

The front and back of your neck will be sore after surgery. This will last for a few hours to a few days. You can use an ice pack to the incision area, this will help reduce both pain and swelling. A heating pad on the back of your neck might help with pain. You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) 1000 mg every 4-6 hours as needed for pain. Do not take more than 4000 mg per day. The day after surgery you may take ibuprofen 400 mg every 4-6 hours as needed for pain. If you are allergic or have other medical conditions that do not allow you to take

either of these your surgeon will provide you with something else.

You may be given a prescription for pain pills to take at home for the first 24-48 hours after surgery.

### **Wound Care**

Your wound is closed with glue. If you have Steri-strips (pieces of tape) that cover the incision, leave the tape on until it falls off or your next doctor visit. Curled tape edges may be trimmed with small scissors. Keep the wound clean and dry. The glue is waterproof. It is okay to shower.

Look at your wound daily to check for signs of an infection.

- Spreading redness or swelling
- Foul-smelling drainage or pus
- A fever (more than 101° F by mouth)

### **Diet**

You can eat your normal diet when you get home. If your throat is still sore, try cold, soft foods.

### **Activities**

You can shower anytime. No swimming or soaking your neck in water for 14 days.

You can drive when you are not taking prescription pain medicine and when you can easily turn your head from side to side.

Light exercise, like walking, is fine for the first week after surgery. Avoid straining or extreme bending of your neck. Do not lift more than 20 pounds the first week.

Most people return to work in one week. If your job requires regular heavy lifting, you may require 2 weeks off. Please discuss this with your surgeon.

### **When to Call**

- If you have trouble breathing, a sudden swelling in your throat, or cannot swallow, **Call 911**.
- Swelling of your neck that is getting worse.
- Numbness or tingling in your fingertips, face, lips, or toes that does not go away after two doses of Tums®.
- Pain that does not get better with prescription pain pills.
- Signs of infection
- Fever greater than 101°F.
- Any other concerns.

### **Who to Call**

Call the 24-hour operator and ask to be transferred to the doctor on call for endocrine surgery.

**608-242-2888 or 1-800-323-8942**

If you are a patient receiving care at Swedish American Hospital, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions.