

Your Care at Home After Thyroplasty

Type I Thyroplasty

Thyroplasty is done to move your paralyzed vocal cord towards the non-paralyzed one so the vocal cords can touch better. This allows for improved voice, swallow function and a stronger ability to cough. The paralyzed vocal cord is moved over with a permanent implant. The key part is done when you are sleepy and relaxed, but still able to respond when the doctor asks you questions to test your voice. A local numbing medicine will be given so you do not feel pain. You may feel some pressure or discomfort. You will be given medicine through your IV to help you relax.

Before Surgery

Before starting the surgery, your doctor(s) will look at your voice box by passing a small flexible camera through your nose to double check which vocal cord is paralyzed. A mark on your neck will be made with a pen to confirm the correct side.

How long does it take?

It takes about 2 hours. You will stay the night in the hospital.

What to Expect After Surgery

- Sore throat and pain at the incision site.
- You will have an incision on the front of your neck with a dressing in place.
- You may have a small drainage tube under the dressing; this will be removed the day after surgery before you go home.
- Some blood-tinged drainage from your incision is normal for the first 2-3 days.

Resting Your Voice

Your surgeon will let you know if you need to rest your voice. Your surgeon may suggest 72 hours of not talking right after the procedure to prevent bleeding and to help swelling decrease. This will help to heal your vocal cords.

Voice Recovery

The recovery of your voice happens with time. Your voice will likely be worse before it gets better, so please be patient. If your voice does not improve, then you should let us know.

Working with a Voice Therapist (speech-language pathologist)

It is very important! They will teach you skills and give you advice on how to restore your voice. Meeting with them before and after the procedure will assure your best outcome.

Activity

- Light activity and no contact sports for at least 2 weeks. **No** lifting more than 25 pounds or straining for 2 weeks.
- Keep your head raised at least 30° on 2-3 pillows when sleeping or resting for 3 days after surgery. **Do not** lie flat in bed.
- Follow voice limits from your surgeon or speech therapist.
- Avoid talking loudly and keep your pitch low.
- **Do not** whisper; this can make it hard to get your voice back to normal.
- Avoid coughing and throat clearing.

Diet

- Drink plenty of fluids, even if you cannot eat much solid food. Advance your diet slowly from liquids to soft foods.
- Avoid spicy foods for 2-3 days after surgery.
- Eat slowly to avoid choking or coughing.

Medicine

- Be sure to take your reflux medicine, if prescribed.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as needed for pain. **Do not** take anti-inflammatory medicine such as ibuprofen or Aleve® for 2 days after surgery.
- Use your prescribed pain medicine, if needed.

Wound Care

- You may shower and get your incision wet 48 hours after surgery. **Do not** soak your incision or submerge your neck under water until your incision is completely healed.
- Clean around your incision with mild soap and water, rinse, and pat dry.
- You can leave your incision open to the air.
- If you have stitches, they will be removed at your first post-op visit.
- Check your incision daily for any signs of infection.
 - Redness
 - Increased swelling
 - Worsening pain
 - Warmth at the incision site
 - Pus-like drainage
 - Fever over 100.5, checked 2 readings 4 hours apart

When to Call

- **If you have trouble breathing, go to the nearest ER or call 911.**
- If you have pain not relieved with pain medicine.
- If you cough up bright red blood or blood clots.
- If you have any sign of infection at the incision site.

Follow-Up Visits

You will see a speech-language pathologist about one week after surgery and have a member of the ENT clinic check your neck. A full follow-up with your doctor and a speech-language pathologist will take place in about 6 weeks.

Who to Call

If you have any questions or problems once you are home, please call.

If you see your surgeon at University Hospital ENT Clinic, call Monday - Friday, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at **(608) 263-6190**.

If you see your surgeon at the 1 S. Park Street ENT Clinic, call Monday - Friday, from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm at **(608) 287-2500**.

After hours, weekends or holidays, the clinic number will give you the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, call:
1-800-323-8942.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2023. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5315.