

## Home Care After Thyroidectomy

### What to Expect

You will have an incision at the base of your neck, covered with a gauze dressing.

You may have a drainage tube. The drainage may look blood-tinged or yellow colored. If you have a drainage tube it is often removed the next day. You may notice drainage from the drain site for the next day or two.

For a short time, your voice may be weak or hoarse. You may feel like you have a lump in your throat. There may be some pain at your incision or when you swallow. If needed, take your pain medicine 30 minutes before eating to help reduce the pain.

### Incision Care

You may shower and wash around the incision site with soap and water 24 hours after surgery or 24 hours after the drainage tube is removed. Do not soak your neck under water until the incision is fully healed.

If you have stitches that need to be removed, this will be done at your first follow-up clinic visit.

If you have white surgical strips, leave them in place until you come back for your first follow-up clinic visit.

### Activity Guidelines

You should take about 1 week off work.

Avoid strenuous exercise such as jogging, aerobics, swimming, or lifting over 10-20 pounds for 1 week.

Keep your head raised while sleeping by using 2-3 pillows for 1 week.

### Parathyroid Glands

These four delicate glands are attached to the thyroid. The parathyroid glands control calcium levels. When these glands don't work, calcium levels are lowered.

Sometimes, the parathyroid glands will not work as a result of the surgery. Patients may need calcium supplements for a short time. Rarely, you may need calcium and vitamin D for the rest of your life.

### Thyroid Replacement Medicine

If you have had your entire thyroid gland removed, you will need to be on thyroid medicine for the rest of your life. Your surgeon will prescribe your first dose. Future prescriptions will come from your primary care doctor or thyroid specialist.

### When to Call

If you have trouble breathing, go to the nearest **emergency room or call 911**.

### Call the doctor if you notice:

- Coughing when you swallow liquids or solids
- Signs and symptoms of infection
  - Redness
  - Fever over 100.5° F by mouth for 24 hours
  - Swelling, pain at the site
  - Pus-like drainage
- Signs and symptoms of low blood calcium
  - Numbness or tingling around your lips or in your fingertips or toes.
  - Facial paralysis

### **Who to Call**

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

ENT Clinic,  
Monday – Friday from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm  
**(608) 263-6190 or 1-800-323-8942.**

ENT Clinic, S. Park St.  
**(608) 287-2500**

After hours, nights and weekends, this will give you the paging operator. Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Give your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you are a patient receiving care at UnityPoint – Meriter, Swedish American or a health system outside of UW Health, please use the phone numbers provided in your discharge instructions for any questions or concerns.

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 © 2/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5735