

THYROID SURGERY POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS

These instructions apply to all thyroid surgery. You and your family should read these instructions several times to familiarize yourselves thoroughly with them. Attempt to follow them faithfully because those who do generally have the smoothest post-operative course.

STAY IN THE HOSPITAL - If we are removing your entire thyroid gland (total thyroidectomy) you will most likely be admitted after your surgery. If we are removing half of the gland (hemi-thyroidectomy or lobectomy), you may stay overnight or you may go home after surgery depending on your age, other medical conditions and your preferences. Admission after surgeries allows us to monitor/treat for pain, bleeding, and low calcium levels (a common side effect after surgery). You will be seen the morning after surgery in the hospital and most likely will be discharged home that morning.

PAIN- Every operation, no matter how minor, is accompanied by swelling and irritation of the surrounding tissues. This may apply to the neck (surgery site) or throat (site of the breathing tube). This may lead to neck pain with movement, swallowing, coughing, and breathing. You also have a hoarse or weak voice for a few days after surgery. It should subside over a period of several days, but may be present for up to 2 weeks.

WOUND CARE- The stitches used to close up the wound after surgery are all dissolvable and underneath the skin. You will have several layers of small white bandages over your neck (steristrips). You may shower with these on starting 48 hours after surgery. After bathing, gently pat and dry and do not scrub them. Showering is fine but do not submerge the wound in a bath, pool or Jacuzzi until you are cleared to do so by her surgeon. The Steri-Strips may start to peel off several days after surgery. He may gently pulled off the outer layer of any strips that are loose and there were usually several layers underneath. Once all of the Steri-Strips are gone you may place an over-the-counter antibiotic ointment on her incision twice a day for 1-2 weeks. After this. You may use a petroleum-based jelly such as Aquaphor, Vaseline or similar. Once healed, take care to always apply sunscreen to the scar when it will be in direct sunlight.

DIET - You should institute a soft diet for 2 weeks. Straws are ok to use. The temperature of the food/liquid does not matter, but most patients prefer cold or luke-warm temperature. Drink lots of clear liquids (water, gatorade, juice, etc) for the full 2 weeks. Milk and red-colored liquids are ok to drink.

- Recommended Foods: ice cream, frozen yogurt, milkshakes, smoothies, blended soups, soft pasta, jello, yogurt.
- Foods to avoid: dry/crunchy foods, foods that require lots of chewing

OTHER SIDE EFFECTS OF SURGERY - often after thyroid surgery you will be placed on calcium (Tums, calcium carbonate) and vitamin D (rocaltrol). These medications may be given for several weeks or months after surgery. Sometimes calcium labs are required as an outpatient service. These may be coordinated by your surgeon or your endocrinologist. If you experience any numbness or tingling of your hands.

RESUMING ACTIVITIES - It is advisable to sleep with the head of the bed elevated for the first week after surgery. This helps to minimize swelling to the surgical site. The head of the bed may be elevated by sleeping on two or three pillows or by placing several pillows under the mattress. You should avoid all activities that may increase the blood pressure in the head area.

Avoid: bending over, lifting heavy objects (anything greater than 10 lbs), doing any activity that would normally make you short of breath or sweat. Try to avoid blowing your nose for two weeks. Try to avoid sneezing for the first several weeks post-operatively. If you must sneeze, let it come out of the mouth like a cough. Excessive coughing should also be avoided.

You should avoid physical activity for 2 weeks.

RETURNING TO WORK OR SCHOOL - The average patient is excused from work/school for 1 week and then slowly returns to work/school over the next week. Return to work or school is dependent upon the amount of physical activity involved.

MEDICATIONS

Children: Your child received pain medications during surgery. Several hours after surgery you should start your child on acetaminophen and ibuprofen liquids (over the counter) at the recommended dose for your child age/weight. It is generally recommend to alternate between acetaminophen and ibuprofen every 3-4 hours. Be care read the recommendations on the bottle to make sure you do not overdose your child with the given medication over a 24 hour period. Even with pain medications your child will still be in some pain, especially with swallowing and talking. If acetaminophen and ibuprofen are not controlling your child's pain, please call the office. Occasionally, stronger prescription narcotics are required to achieve adequate pain control, but in general these are not recommended unless other medications are not adequate.

Further Instructions: _____

Instructions received with understanding: _____
(Signature of responsible adult)

Signature RN _____ Date/ Time _____