

Center for Endocrine Tumors and Disorders

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THYROID SURGERY – WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER SURGERY

This information helps you understand your hospital stay so you have realistic expectations for the first few days after surgery. Following the guidelines on this sheet will help you recover from your surgery as quickly as possible and reduce the risk of some complications.

What to expect on a day to day basis:

Day 0: the afternoon and evening of surgery:

Once you wake up you should start your breathing and leg exercises. You will be encouraged to sit in a chair and walk in the hallway.

You will be allowed to have a full diet once you are fully awake from the anesthesia and without nausea.

You will be allowed to talk and move your next as usual.

You will be started on oral pain pills including liquid Tylenol or liquid Tylenol/narcotic combination. **No NSAIDs** will be given. Chloraseptic spray and lozenges will be given for your sore throat.

Most patients will be allowed to go the day of surgery after 5–6 hours in the recovery. If you had more extensive surgery (ie a neck dissection), have Grave's disease, live far away, or have multiple medical problems, you may stay overnight for observation.

If you have had your whole thyroid removed you will be started on thyroid replacement, calcium supplements and possibly vitamin D. You will also have your calcium level checked before you leave the hospital.

Day 1: the first post-op day:

If you are still in the hospital you will very likely go home today. Your calcium will be checked in the morning to make sure it is at a good level before you go home.

If you are already at home, you will go to a lab to get your calcium checked sometime in the morning. If there are any abnormalities, we will call you to change your home calcium medication.

You may shower once you get home.

You may resume your normal activities as you feel able.

Specific points:

Breathing exercises: These are extremely important. You should do these every hour during waking hours, taking at least ten deep breaths. This expands the small air sacs in the lungs and minimizes postoperative fever and pneumonia. You should continue these exercises for a few days once you return to your home.

New medications: This is for people that have had their whole thyroid removed. You will be given a prescription for thyroid hormone replacement which you should start taking within 1–3 days. You will also be discharged on calcium supplementation and possibly vitamin D – continue taking these medications as directed. Further instructions will be given to you at the time of discharge.

Going home: When you go home, expect to be able to drink and eat freely. Your main complaint will be a sore throat that will last for 3–4 days; throat lozenges, chloraseptic spray, and ice cream/frozen yogurt (yes, your doctor is prescribing ice cream) provide the best relief. You will be on oral pain medications for any residual pain or discomfort. You may experience some swelling around the incision – this is normal. Cold compresses sometimes provide relief. If you live alone, you may wish to make arrangements with family or friends in advance to stay with them for a day. If you live a long distance away from Providence Saint Johns, you may wish to make arrangements with a local hotel to stay nearby for a day (which we can help you with) before going home if you have outpatient surgery.

Upon discharge please call our office to make a follow-up appointment in about 2 weeks.

Should any questions or concerns arise, please call our office: 310–829–8751

Monday – Friday: 8am –5pm

Weekends, Holidays or after-hours

If you are not able to reach a live person, please call the hospital operator and ask for **Dr Goldfarb or the Surgical Oncology fellow on-call.**

