



## POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR THYROID AND PARATHYROID SURGERIES

### SUBJECT POST OP

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There is a steri-strip (white tape) dressing over your incision that **should be peeled off at 5-7 days after surgery** (leaving them on longer can cause skin irritation and itching). The stitches are all on the inside and are absorbable, so there are none to take out. All patients can shower the day following surgery, let water and soap run over the wound and pat dry. Please apply ice packs to the wound on/off the neck for the first 1-2 days after the surgery. It is fine to sleep in a bed after the surgery, just try to rest on two pillows for the first 2 days to minimize swelling.

Patients can drive when they are not taking narcotic medications (usually 2-3 days). You may return to work or full activity when you feel ready. This is typically about 1-2 weeks. Please limit lifting more than 10 lbs or any strenuous exercise for 10 days after surgery.

It is normal to have a very sore throat (from the breathing tube) and a sensation of a "lump in the throat" after these procedures, as the body fills with fluid where the thyroid or parathyroid glands were removed. Since our surgeons make smaller incisions and have to retract muscle in the region to allow for minimally invasive techniques, you may also feel soreness throughout the neck from positioning and retraction during surgery. It is also normal to feel a **hard area near the incision** that is scar tissue. This should improve after 8-12 weeks, and gentle circular massage to the area with your fingers may help, starting 1 week after surgery. Patients can also have some hoarseness and voice fatigue after surgery lasting from a few days to even a few months. These symptoms should fade away with time.

The parathyroid glands are very sensitive and may take time to recover from the stress of surgery. They balance calcium in the body which can lower while the parathyroids recover.

**You need to be taking extra calcium (Tums) 1000 mg tablets after surgery** (unless you just have half of your thyroid removed, where you will not need extra):

- **Total Thyroidectomy patients ONLY:** 1,000mg once every 8 hours for the first 5 days (once with each meal)
- **Parathyroidectomy patients ONLY:** 1,000mg once every 12 hours for the next 3 days

**For Total Thyroidectomy patients ONLY:** Along with the calcium (Tums), you will get a prescription for Calcitriol (**this is NOT calcium, but Vitamin D**) that helps the body absorb the extra calcium. The tums will not work without the calcitriol (Vit D) so it is important to take both. If you experience any numbness or tingling of the fingers, toes or around the mouth, please take an extra tums and if it does not improve within a few hours, please notify Dr. Brady or Dr. Sabra.

\*\*Also, if you have an upset stomach or dizziness, STOP taking the Tums and call the office.

It is very common for patients to become constipated after surgery while on calcium supplementation. Please use Miralax as needed. It is also common to feel chest "congestion"; if this occurs you can use over-the-counter Mucinex to help.

If you are taking thyroid replacement hormone, this can resume the day after surgery. Those patients not on thyroid hormone may start thyroid medication immediately or within a few days after a total thyroidectomy. After the thyroid is removed, thyroid hormone continues to circulate in the body for up to a few weeks. Those having a partial thyroid removal will likely not need thyroid medication after the operation, and we will check thyroid levels 4-6 weeks after the operation. It is very common to feel very fatigued for the first few weeks after thyroid surgery, even if you have started replacement hormone.

Please call us if you have any questions or concerns. Our office number is 512.887.3187. For urgent or emergency concerns, call 911 first if necessary, and then Dr. Brady or Dr. Sabra on their cell phones at 512.590.4140 or 512.789.2122.