Thyroid and Parathyroid Surgery

What to expect and how to prepare for your operation

How to Prepare for Your Operation

Things to Remember

- **Do not** take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 1 week before your operation. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). See attached sheet for more information.

- **Do not** shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do **not** shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.

- **You will need someone to drive you home from the hospital when you are discharged.**

24 Hours Before Your Operation

- **Take 2 showers:** Take 1 shower the night before, and a second shower the morning of your operation. Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.

  Do **not** use the antibacterial soap on your face and hair. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair. Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothing.

- **Arrival time:** The pre-surgery nurse will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your operation. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the nurse will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from the pre-surgery nurse by 5 p.m., please call 206-598-6334.
Remember:
Do not take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting for 1 week before your operation.

The pre-surgery nurse will tell you when to come to the hospital and will remind you:
- Not to eat or drink after a certain time.
- Which of your regular medicines to take or not take.
- To sip only enough water to swallow your pills.

- **Heating blanket:** To reduce your risk of infection, you will be covered with a heating blanket to warm your body while you wait to go into the operating room. Ask for a heating blanket if you do not receive one.

**What to Expect After Surgery**

**Precautions and Self-care to Speed Your Recovery**

Medicine given to you during and after your operation will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery, do **not**:

- Drive or travel alone.
- Use machinery.
- Drink alcohol.
- Sign any legal papers.
- Be responsible for the care of another person.

**Incision Care**

You will have an incision across the lower part of your neck. A dressing (bandage) will cover it. After you remove your dressing, check your incision daily for any sign of infection (see the back of this handout) or for rapid swelling.

To help lessen swelling, sleep with your head elevated at least 45 degrees. You can do this by propping up your head and neck on 3 pillows.

**Dressing**

You may remove your dressing and take a shower 2 days after your operation. Do **not** remove the Steri-Strip tape over your incision. It will be removed at your follow-up visit. After you shower, pat your incision dry and leave it open to the air.

**Pain Management**

Use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or the pain medicine your doctor prescribed to ease your pain. You can also apply ice to the incision area to help lessen any swelling. Wrap the ice in a towel or cloth to protect your skin.
Questions?

UWMC Surgical Specialties Nurse Advice Line:
206-598-4549
(weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

SCCA Endocrine Clinic Nurse Line:
206-288-1160
(weekdays 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206-598-6190 and ask for the resident on call for Surgery to be paged.

Or, ask for your surgeon to be paged:
Dr. _______________

Symptoms of Low Calcium

After your operation, your blood-calcium level may be low for a short time. Take Tums or Viactiv Calcium Soft Chews Plus Vitamins D & K as you were instructed.

If you have any twitching, or if you have tingling around your mouth or in your fingertips or toes, take an extra dose of 2 or 3 Tums tablets or Viactiv chews. If your symptoms still do not lessen after you have taken 10 Tums tablets or Viactiv chews in 24 hours, call one of the phone numbers in the “Questions” box on this page.

Activity and Work

- After your operation, your neck may be stiff.
- Do not drive until you are no longer taking narcotic pain medicine and you can turn your head without pain.
- Most people take 1 to 2 weeks off work to recover.

Call the Nurse Advice Line or Your Doctor If You Have:

- Trouble breathing.
- Severe swelling of your neck.
- Trouble swallowing.
- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing.
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C).
- Shaking and chills.
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
  - Redness
  - Increasing pain
  - Swelling
  - Foul-smelling drainage
  - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit.