

Greenville ENT Post-op Instructions



What to Expect at Home

Thyroid Surgery

Your Recovery

Your doctor made a cut (incision) in your neck and removed part or maybe all of your thyroid gland. This kind of surgery is done to find what is causing a lump, to remove a growth or cancer in the gland, or when the gland is not functioning correctly.

The tissue that was removed will be tested to determine what caused the problem and that test result will guide any additional treatments.

You may leave the hospital with stitches in your cut (incision). Your doctor will tell you if you need to return to have these removed. Often, absorbable sutures are used that will not need to be removed.

Steristrips are applied to the incision in many cases. It is ok to allow these to become wet. If they start to peel off, it is ok to remove them. They will be removed at your postop visit if they have not come off by that time.

You may be discharged with a tube in your neck called a drain. Your doctor or a member of the team usually

removes this drain 24-72 hours after your surgery. An appointment will be arranged for you if necessary.

Depending on your specific problem, you may be able to go home on the same day as surgery, but many people stay one or more nights in the hospital after surgery.

Most people are able to return to work and resume their normal routine in 1 to 2 weeks. Your timeline will depend on whether you need more treatment, how you feel, and the kind of work you do.

Your doctor will check your incision 1-2 weeks after surgery. You may need to take thyroid medicine, and this will be prescribed the day of surgery if you need it. If you have thyroid cancer, your doctor will talk to you about what happens next.

You will feel some pain for several days. You may have some nausea and general muscle aches and may feel tired. You could also have a sore throat and/or sound hoarse.

Low blood calcium can occur after thyroid surgery. Symptoms of low calcium include numbness or tingling around the lips and fingers or muscle cramping. If you experience these symptoms, you should contact your doctor. Calcium supplementation may be needed. If calcium supplementation is needed, it is usually only for a few weeks.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover, but each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to feel better as quickly as possible.

Medicine

	You can start back your regular medication, unless instructed otherwise.
	If you take aspirin or some other blood thinner, be sure to check with your doctor about when to start taking it again.
	You will probably be prescribed narcotic pain medicine (such as Norco). There is tylenol in many narcotic pain medicines, so be sure not to take additional tylenol, which can be very dangerous.
	If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach, take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to). Take nausea medicine (such as Zofran) as prescribed.
	Your doctor may have prescribed antibiotics. Take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.

Activity

	Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
	Most people are able to return to work several days after surgery, but this can depend on what type of work you do.

Diet

	You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
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Incision care

	You may have strips of tape, stitches, or skin glue over your incision.
	Keep the area clean and dry.
	You should get instructions on whether to use antibiotic ointment or a bandage on your incision.

Exercise

	Avoid strenuous activities, such as bicycle riding, jogging, weight lifting, or aerobic exercise for two weeks, or until your doctor says it is okay.
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Elevation

	You may be more comfortable if you keep your head up on a pillow when you lie down. Support the back of your head and neck with both hands when you sit up to prevent discomfort.
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When should you call for help?

Call 911 anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

	You have severe trouble breathing.
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Call your doctor or seek medical care if:

	You have a lot of bleeding through the bandage.
	You have a hard time swallowing.
	You have trouble breathing.
	You have new or worsening pain.

You have symptoms of infection, such as:

- Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.
- Red streaks leading from the incision.
- Pus draining from the incision.
- A fever over 101F