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# Post-operative Instructions following Thyroidectomy

## General:

You may be hospitalized for one or two nights following your thyroid procedure. Your surgeon will see you each day of your hospitalization to ensure that you are recovering well.

## Diet:

You may have liquids by mouth once you have awakened from anesthesia. If you tolerate the liquids without significant nausea or vomiting then you may take solid foods without restrictions. Generally patients experience a mild sore throat for 2-3 days following thyroidectomy. This usually does not interfere with swallowing.

## Pain Control:

Patients report mild to moderate neck pain for several days following thyroidectomy. This is usually well controlled with prescription strength oral pain medications (Vicodin, Hydrocodone, Tylenol #3, Ultracet). Please take the pain medication prescribed by your surgeon when needed. You should avoid non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) such as aspirin, ibuprofen, naproxen (Excedrin, Motrin, Naprosyn, Advil) because these drugs are mild blood thinners and will increase your chances of having a post-operative bleed into the neck tissues or neck wound. Please contact our office (602) 258-9859 if your pain is not controlled with your prescription pain medication.

## Activity:

Sleep with the head elevated for the first 48 hours. You may use two pillows to do this or sleep in a reclining chair. No heavy lifting or straining for 2 weeks following the surgery. You should plan for 1 week away from work. If your job requires manual labor, lifting or straining then you should be out of work for 2 weeks or limited to light duty until the 2 week mark.

## Wound Care:

The wound closure type dictates the post-operative wound care. The type of wound closure is evident by looking at your wound. You will either have sutures (black or blue stitches) steri-strips (paper tape strips) or tissue adhesive (a transparent layer of "skin glue"). If you are not certain which wound closure type you have please ask your nurse or surgeon. Regardless of the wound closure technique, mild redness and swelling around the wound is normal and will decrease over the 2 weeks following surgery. If you have questions about the appearance of the wound you may ask your nurse or surgeon prior to discharge from the hospital or surgery center. If a drain has been placed in the neck, this will be removed prior to your discharge unless otherwise directed by your surgeon.

### **Tissue adhesive wound care instructions:**

Do not wash, wet or manipulate the neck wound for 48 hours following the thyroidectomy. The wound has been closed with absorbable sutures underneath the skin. There is a protective layer of transparent tissue adhesive over the wound that seals the skin together during the first week of healing. This provides a barrier against infection and avoids the nuisance and discomfort of external stitches. This layer of tissue adhesive will ultimately fall off (slough) in about 7-10 days as your skin is renewed. It is okay to shower or bathe and get the wound wet 48 hours following surgery. Allow soap and water to run over the wound. Do not scrub or manipulate the site. You should gently pat the area dry, but don't rub it with a towel. Do not apply ointments, lotions or creams to the tissue adhesive over the wound.

### **Steri-strip wound care instructions:**

Do not wash or manipulate the neck wound for 48 hours following the thyroidectomy. The wound has been closed with absorbable sutures underneath the skin. There is a layer of paper tape strips (Steri-strips) covering the incision site. This layer of Steri-strips provides extra support to the wound for the first 7-10 days following the surgery. It is okay to get these Steri-strips wet after 48 hours from the time of surgery. Therefore, you may shower and allow the wound and strips to get wet 2 days following the surgery. Allow soap and water to run over the strips. Do not scrub or manipulate the site. Pat the area dry, but don't rub it with a towel. A hair dryer on cool setting may also be used to dry the Steri-strips. The Steri-strips will start to roll up on the edges and eventually fall off on their own after about 10 days. If the strips are curling at the edges but not falling off, you may trim them with small, clean cuticle scissors purchased at your local pharmacy. Once the Steri-strips have all fallen off you may gently lather the site with soap and water when washing.

### **Sutures wound care instructions:**

Do not wash or manipulate the neck wound for 48 hours following the thyroidectomy (except to apply ointment). The neck dressing will be removed on the morning following your surgery. Please take a moment to look at the wound in the mirror prior to your discharge from the hospital. You will find that the skin has been closed with sutures that will be removed at your one week follow-up appointment. Once you are home, apply a thin layer of the prescribed antibiotic ointment to the wound 3 times daily. This is best accomplished by washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water and then gently coating the wound with ointment using your finger. If you have a history of eczema, then apply Vaseline petroleum jelly to the wound 3 times daily instead of the antibiotic ointment. You may shower and allow the wound to get wet 48 hours following the surgery. Allow soap and water to run over the wound. Do not scrub or manipulate the wound for 7 days. Pat the area dry, don't rub it with a towel. After 7 days you may gently lather the wound with soap and water. Sutures are removed at your first post-operative visit.

### **Follow-up Appointment:**

Your follow-up appointment in the office will be 5-8 days following your surgery. This visit should be scheduled prior to your surgery (at the time of your pre-operative visit). If you do not have the appointment made, please contact our office when you arrive home from the hospital. At the post-operative visit, your surgical site is examined and your pathology report is reviewed with you.

## **Please call our office immediately if you experience:**

- \*Difficulty breathing (call 911 first)**
- \*Neck swelling**
- \*Numbness or tingling in your fingertips or lips**
- \*Muscle cramps or spasms**
- \*Bleeding from the wound**
- \*Choking or coughing when drinking liquids**
- \*Fever greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit**
- \*Purulent discharge (pus) coming from the wound**
- \*Increasing redness around the wound**

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