



SOUTHERN UTAH
Ear, Nose and Throat

THYROIDECTOMY/PARATHYROIDECTOMY

What to expect:

1. The typical period of throat pain is about 10 – 14 days
2. Difficulty swallowing is often seen, as there is a “full” feeling in the lower throat.
3. In general, the first few days are the worst, then there is gradual improvement.
4. Some hoarseness can be expected for several days. This is generally due to the breathing tube (endotracheal tube) that was placed in the airway during the anesthetic procedure. The placement of the breathing tube may cause swelling of the vocal cords as a side effect.
5. There may be a drain in the wound for several days. This may produce a discharge during that period of time. The drain is removed on the first to third postoperative day.

Diet:

1. For the first day, thin and thicker fluids are best. Solid foods should be avoided.
2. Typically starting on the second day, it is best to eat soft foods that do not require a lot of chewing and are easy to swallow. These would include mashed potatoes, scrambled eggs, milkshakes, oatmeal, etc. You can advance to a regular diet over the first week as you desire.

Activity:

1. After discharge from the hospital, you should remain at home for the first week. Lifting anything heavy (over 20 lbs.) should be avoided. Sleeping on three pillows to elevate the head above the heart is encouraged. No sports should be undertaken for at least two weeks, and for the next two weeks, limit yourself to mild exercise. No contact sports should be participated in for a month or more. Try not to stretch the neck, putting increased tension on the incision, for at least three weeks.
2. Avoid getting the wound wet for the first week. Bathing is better than showering. Don't soak the wound. It is permissible to get the wound wet for short periods of time after the first week.
3. Leave the tape over the wound in place. Your doctor will change it after approximately 10 days.

Pain Control:

1. A prescription pain medication will be given for the first week. Generally, a refill will be included for the second week, if needed.

Things to observe:

1. Thyroidectomy includes a risk of injury to the nerves that move the vocal cords. If you develop significant increasing hoarseness or difficulty breathing, contact the office or the physician on call. If the situation is urgent, proceed to the Emergency Department at the nearest hospital.
2. Calcium irregularities are occasionally seen. Symptoms of low calcium include cramping of the hands, arms and feet. Tingling around the mouth may also be noted and actually may be the first symptom observed. This tingling can progress to the hands and arms. It is best to call the office or the on-call physician or proceed to the Emergency Department at the nearest hospital for an IV injection of calcium. Low calcium can be a serious problem that needs to be corrected as soon as possible.
3. Fever is usually observed in the first day or two but should remain below 100.5°F. If your fever is higher than this call the office or the on-call physician.
4. Swelling of the neck is often seen, though to a mild degree. If the neck swelling is progressive, or increasingly tender (especially if there is increasing redness around the wound), contact the office or the on-call physician.