
Discharge Instructions for Thyroidectomy

You had surgery called thyroidectomy. This means that part or all of your thyroid gland was removed. The main job of the thyroid gland is to make thyroid hormone. This hormone controls your body's metabolism. This is the way your body creates and uses energy.

Removing the thyroid gland removes your body's source of thyroid hormone. This is especially true if you had your whole thyroid gland removed.

So after the surgery, you will need to take thyroid hormone pills every day. This helps keep the level of thyroid hormone in your body steady.

Recovering after surgery

- Get plenty of rest.
- For the first week, keep your head raised while you sleep.
- Take your pain medicines as instructed if needed.
- Care for your cut (incision) as directed.
- Avoid doing vigorous sports, such as swimming, and activities that include heavy lifting, for at least 10 days to 2 weeks.
- There might be some pain and soreness in your neck at first, especially when you swallow. Eating soft foods, such as pudding, gelatin, mashed potatoes, applesauce, and yogurt, may help.
- Pain medicines can cause constipation. Eating high-fiber foods and drinking plenty of fluids may help prevent constipation.
- Walk a few times daily. But don't push yourself too hard. Slowly increase how fast and how far you go, as you feel able.
- Return to work when your health care provider says it's okay.
- Keep a card in your wallet that lists:
 - Your name and contact information.
 - Your provider's name and contact information.
 - The name of your disease and the type of surgery or other treatment you've had.
 - The brand name and dose of your medicine.

Taking your thyroid medicine

- Take your medicine as directed.
- Use a pillbox labeled with the days of the week. This will help you remember if you've taken your medicine each day.

- Take your medicine on an empty stomach with a full glass of water. Take it 30 to 60 minutes before breakfast. Try not to have food or medicine for at least 1 hour after you take the pill or 4 hours before you take the pill. The pill needs to reach your stomach and not dissolve in your throat. Do not crush or cut the medicine.
- Medicines that decrease stomach acid may also interfere with absorbing thyroid hormone from your stomach.
- After taking your medicine:
 - Wait 4 hours before you eat or drink anything that contains soy.
 - Wait 4 hours before you take certain medicines. These include:
 - Iron supplements.
 - Calcium supplements.
 - Antacids that contain either calcium or aluminum hydroxide.
 - Some medicines that lower your cholesterol.
- Don't stop taking your medicine even if you become pregnant. Your dose may have to be increased during pregnancy.
- Never stop taking medicines on your own.

Going to your medical appointments

- See your health care provider for regular visits as recommended to keep track of your health.
- Have routine blood tests done. These check the level of thyroid hormone in your body. This helps your provider know to adjust the dosage of your medicine if needed. These tests are most often done no more than once every 6 weeks. Later on, you may only need blood tests once a year.
- Early after surgery, your calcium level will also need to be checked. This is especially likely if all or most of your thyroid was removed.
- Tell your provider about any signs of further thyroid problems.
- Signs that you may have too much thyroid hormone in your body include:
 - Restlessness.
 - Rapid weight loss.
 - Sweating.
 - Palpitations.
- Signs that you may have too little thyroid hormone in your body include:
 - Extreme tiredness (fatigue) or sluggishness.
 - Puffy hands, face, or feet.

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- Dry, coarse, or cold skin.
 - Hoarseness.
 - Muscle pain.
 - A slow pulse (less than 60 beats per minute).
 - For women, more bleeding during menstrual periods.

When to get medical care

Contact your health care provider or get medical care right away if you have:

- A fever above 100.4°F (38°C), or as advised by your provider.
- Swelling or bleeding at the incision site.
- Choking (Call **911**).
- Trouble breathing (Call **911**).
- A sore throat that lasts longer than 7 days.
- Tingling or cramps in your hands, feet, or lips.
- Hoarseness that doesn't improve or that gets worse.