

Parathyroid Surgery

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout for patients at University of Washington Medical Center explains how to prepare for parathyroid surgery. It includes self-care after the surgery, and when to call the doctor.

There are many ways to treat parathyroid disease. Your doctor will treat your condition with *minimally invasive surgery*. This type of surgery uses small incisions, which allow your body to heal quickly.

How to Prepare

- Starting **1 week** before your surgery, do **not** take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). See the attached sheet for more information.
- Starting **48 hours** before your surgery, do **not** use a razor to shave any part of your body. We want to avoid skin cuts on the day of surgery.
- **A responsible adult MUST drive you home from the hospital when you are discharged.** You cannot drive yourself, or take a bus or taxi by yourself.
- During your pre-op visit, the nurse 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.



A responsible adult must drive you home from the hospital.

Day Before Surgery

- **Shower:** Take a shower the night before your surgery:
 - 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 clothes.
- **Arrival time:** A Surgery patient care coordinator (PCC) will call you by 5 p.m. the night before your surgery. If you are having surgery on a Monday, the PCC will call you the Friday before. If you do not receive this call by 5 p.m., please call **206.598.6541**.

Day of Surgery

At Home

- **Fast:** Follow the nurse's instructions about not eating and drinking.
- **Shower:** Take another shower with the antibacterial soap. Follow the same steps as you did the night before.
- **Medicines:** Follow the instructions the nurse gave you about which medicines to take or not take. Remember to sip **only** enough water to swallow your pills.

At the Hospital

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

What to Expect After Surgery

For Your Safety

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 anyone else, such as children, pets, or an adult who needs care

Incision Care

- You will have an incision across the lower part of your neck. It will be closed with *sutures* (stitches).
- Keep your incision clean (see "Showering," on page 3).

- If you have *Steri-Strips* (white tape) over your incision, leave them in place for 1 week.
- We will remove your sutures at your clinic visit, 7 to 10 days after your surgery.
- To help lessen swelling, sleep with your head raised at least 45 degrees. You can do this by propping up your head and neck on 3 pillows.

Showering

- You may take a shower 2 days after your surgery.
- Do **not** remove the Steri-Strips over your incision.
- After you shower, pat your incision dry. Do not cover it. Leave it open to the air.

Pain Control

After surgery, your neck may be stiff. For pain control:

- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for mild to moderate pain. Follow the dose instructions on the label. Alternate taking Tylenol and ibuprofen every 3 to 4 hours.
- For severe pain, take the pain medicine (opioids) your doctor prescribed. Take this medicine **only** as prescribed.

Swelling

You can apply ice to the incision area to help lessen any swelling. Do not place ice directly on your skin. Wrap the ice in a towel or cloth first.

Low Calcium

After surgery, your blood-calcium level may be low for a short time.

- Take Tums or Viactiv Calcium Soft Chews Plus Vitamins D & K, as instructed.
- If you have 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.
- After 24 hours, if your symptoms still do not lessen, **and** you have taken 10 Extra Strength (500 mg) Tums tablets or Viactiv chews, call one of the phone numbers in the “Questions” box on the next page.

Activity and Work

- Do **not** drive until you:
 - Have stopped taking opioid pain medicine
 - Can turn your head without pain
- Most people take 1 to 2 weeks off work to recover after this surgery.

When to Call

Call the clinic or your doctor if you have:

- Trouble breathing
- A lot of swelling in your neck
- Trouble swallowing
- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 101.5°F (38.6°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
 - Redness
 - Increasing pain
 - Swelling
 - Bad-smelling drainage
 - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea or vomiting, or both
- Tingling around your mouth, fingertips, or toes
- Muscle twitching
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- **To set up a clinic visit**, call the Otolaryngology/Head and Neck Surgery Center at 206.598.4022 and press 8 to speak to the front desk.

- **If you are already a patient** and have questions about your treatment plan:

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Head and Neck Voice Mail Line at 206.598.7535.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.4022 and press 5 when you hear the recording. This will connect you with a nurse on the Community Care Line.