

General Instructions for Surgery

Pre-Admission Testing

All patients scheduled for surgery **must have the following tests done** at the facility of their choice up to 1 month before their planned surgery:

- Chem 7, CBC, PT, PTT
- EKG & Chest x-ray (age 45 and above, accepted up to 6 months prior to surgery)

The Day of Surgery

Please plan to arrive at La Peer Surgery Center or Cedars-Sinai Medical Center 2 hours prior to your surgery time. You will be called by the hospital or surgery center to confirm your surgery on the day prior to your surgery. If they have not called by 4:30 pm that day, please call **our office**.

Do not eat after midnight before your planned surgery. You can have clear liquids up to 8 hours before surgery. You may take your usual asthma, heart, blood pressure or seizure medication with a small sip of water that morning, unless otherwise advised. **Please do not take any aspirin or other over the counter pain medications for one week before your surgery.** You may use Tylenol in the week before surgery. If you are a diabetic, consult with your physician before taking your medication.

If you develop a cold, sore throat, fever or any illness, please call your surgeon's office prior to your surgery.

We hope that this pamphlet answers some of your questions about postoperative care after thyroid and parathyroid surgery. We encourage you to talk to your physician to learn more about your condition. Although individuals have different needs, most patients follow these guidelines for their operative course. Your surgeon will discuss your individual needs at the time of your pre-operative consultation. If you find that you have additional questions after your consultation, it is a good idea to write them all down.

Parathyroid Surgery Post-operative Care

Thyroid & Parathyroid
Surgical Program

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Monitoring Your Progress

You should remain in bed for the first 24 hours after surgery. If you have any questions regarding your progress, call us right away. Make an appointment to see your surgeon one week after surgery.

Incision

Your incision is covered with a protective tape called **Steri-strip**. Apply an ice pack to the lower neck the first 24 hours. You can shower and wash your hair as usual the day after surgery, but do not soak or scrub the incision. Please pull the tape off 4 days after surgery. After the tape removal, apply antibiotic ointment (Neosporin) to the incision twice a day for 5 days, then switch to vitamin E ointment twice a day and sunblock (SPF 35) in the morning for the next 2 months. Keeping the incision out of the sun will help it heal better.

You might notice bruising around your incision or upper chest. **Swelling above the incision** will last for several weeks. In addition, the scar may become pink and hard. This hardening will peak at about 3 weeks and may result in some tightness, which will disappear over the next 2 to 3 months. Firm massaging of the scar starting 2 weeks after surgery will help.

Pain

The main complaint after surgery is pain with swallowing; this is due to the breathing tube used for anesthesia. The pain can persist for 3 days. Tylenol can generally control this pain. Some prefer Vicodin, but usually strong medications are not necessary.

Voice

Your voice may go through temporary changes with fluctuations in volume and clarity (hoarseness). Generally, it will be better in the mornings and "tire" toward the end of the day. This can last for variable periods of time, but should clear in 4-6 weeks.

Activity

In general, your activity level depends on the amount of discomfort you have. You can resume sports activities 4 weeks after surgery. Most patients are able to return to work in the first two weeks. You are able to drive as soon as your head can be turned comfortably.

Hypocalcemia

In all patients who have parathyroid surgery, the remaining parathyroid glands do not function properly immediately after surgery. This is usually temporary and causes the blood calcium level to drop below normal (this is called hypocalcemia).

Symptoms of hypocalcemia include:

1. **Numbness and tingling in your hands, soles of your feet and around your lips**
2. **Some patients experience a "crawling" sensation in the skin**
3. **Muscle cramps**
4. **Severe headaches.**

These symptoms appear between 24 and 48 hours after surgery. It is rare for them to start after 72 hours.

Hypocalcemia Prevention

Refer to the table below

Hypocalcemia Symptom Treatment

Patients with calciums of less than 14 prior to

surgery: at any point if symptoms develop, you should take 4 extra Citracal D pills and call your doctor as soon as possible.

Patients with calciums more than 14 prior to surgery, or with hyperplasia: if symptoms develop, you should take an extra 2000 milligrams of Calcium, and an extra Rocalcitrol, and call your doctor as soon as possible

After Surgery Blood Tests

(You will be given perscriptions for these tests)

1. **One week after surgery:** Calcium Level
2. **One month after surgery:** Calcium & PTH Level

Bleeding

It is common to have some bruising around the incision area. If bleeding occurs, you will notice immediate swelling in the neck and difficulty breathing. This is extremely rare but it is an absolute emergency. If it does occur, immediately call 911.

After Surgery Calcium Replacement with Citracal D (315mg of calcium & 200 IU of Vitamin D ₃)			
Average Calcium Level Before Surgery	Calcium Pills Starting the Day of Surgery & 1 st Week	Calcium Pills (2 nd Week)	Maintenance Dose Starting Week 3
10.0 - 11.9	4 pills	3 pills	2 pills
12.0 - 12.5	6 pills	4 pills	2 pills
12.6 - 13.0	7 pills	4 pills	2 pills
13.1 - 14.0	8 pills	5 pills	3 pills
Hyperplasia or Greater than 14.0	2000 mg OsCal twice a day, Rocalcitrol (Vitamin D) pill once daily		3 pills