

Dr Joanna Morgan
Specialist Breast Thyroid and Parathyroid Surgeon



PATIENT INFORMATION – POST OPERATIVE CARE

TOTAL THYROIDECTOMY

Wound Care

Your thyroid gland has been removed during surgery. The skin has been numbed with local anaesthetic and sewn closed with a blue removable stitch. Paper stitches (Steristrips®) have been stuck onto the skin over the scar. A drain tube will be removed before you leave hospital. Please check the wound dressing daily. You may have a shower and get the Steristrips® wet. Dry your neck by carefully dabbing the dressing dry, allowing it to air dry or even using a hairdryer on low heat. Be warned not to inadvertently burn your skin.

Pain Relief

Regular pain relief with paracetamol (e.g. Panadol®) 1g (two 500mg tablets) four times a day for the first few days after leaving hospital often provides sufficient pain relief.

Diet

Choose softer foods (e.g. soup, pasta, ice cream) for the first few days after surgery as your throat might be sore. Lozenges can also be soothing.

Activity

To avoid developing a stiff neck, spend a few minutes, three or four times a day to do neck exercises. Carefully flex and extend your neck, rotate left and right, and laterally flex by trying to touch each ear on its neighbouring shoulder. Gentle exercise, for example walking, is recommended to reduce risks of deep vein thrombosis and pneumonia. You should avoid more vigorous exercise for at least a week after surgery. Driving should be avoided if possible until review following discharge. Usually I would recommend one to two weeks off work, but naturally this can vary.

Complications

Serious wound problems after leaving hospital are rare. However, minor neck swelling around the scar is common and will settle with time. **If you develop difficulty breathing and/or significant neck swelling then call an ambulance on 000.** Infection is uncommon, but may be suspected if the wound becomes increasingly tender and red. You might start to feel unwell with a fever. Low levels of blood calcium would usually be detected before leaving hospital. Symptoms include tingling or numbness around your mouth and fingers and muscle twitchiness. You may be prescribed calcium +/- vitamin D to treat this. The quality of your voice may have altered and frequently improves over the coming days and weeks. Thyroid hormone replacement will be prescribed before you leave hospital.

Appointment

Prior to leaving hospital, an appointment should be made for review within one week from surgery. Please ring Dr Joanna Morgan's secretary on 03 9591 9891 if you do not have an appointment.

Contact

If you have a concern, please contact Dr Joanna Morgan or the hospital.