



SURGICAL CONSULTANTS
OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

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Thyroidectomy

Post-op Expectations

- Numbness of the skin under the chin or above the incision is normal and should go away in a few weeks
- You may feel a lump or pressure in your throat when swallowing for a few days.
- You may have temporary throat discomfort or difficulty swallowing. These symptoms will gradually improve over the course of several weeks.
- Your incision may feel itchy while it heals. Avoid rubbing or scratching if possible.
- You may feel neck stiffness, tightness, a pulling feeling, mild aching chest discomfort, headache, ear pain or congestion.
- Your voice may be hoarse or weak. Pitch or tone may change. You may have difficulty singing. This usually goes back to normal over 6 weeks to 6 months.
- Most patients are able to return to a full-time work schedule in 1-2 weeks, but varies according to your job.
- • Mild swelling at the incision site will go away in 4-6 weeks. The pink line will slowly fade to white during the next 6-12 months.
- After surgery, you may notice a change in your mood, emotional ups and downs, depression, irritability, fatigue or weakness. These changes will get better as time passes.
- Being active is normally well tolerated within reason.

Instructions:

- Do NOT drive until you can turn your neck side to side, which may take 1-2 weeks.
- Do NOT drive while you are taking pain medicines.
- Drink and eat foods that can be swallowed easily, e.g. juice, soup, gelatin, applesauce, scrambled eggs or mashed potatoes.
- You may be able to return to your usual diet in a couple of days.
- Please leave the Steri-strips in place on your incision and allow them to fall off on their own. If they have not fallen off in 10-14 days, you may remove them yourself.
- You may shower 48 hours after surgery but please do not swim or soak in a tub for at least 2 weeks.

- After showering, just pat your incision dry. If it is draining clear fluid, you can cover it with a dry dressing (such as gauze).
- Do NOT scrub with soap or washcloth for the first 10 days.
- Some people prefer to sleep with an extra pillow for the first few days after the surgery, keeping swelling around your incision to a minimum.
- Use a sunscreen (SPF#30 or higher) or wear a scarf for protection if in the sun for the first 6 months to a year as the sun can darken your scar.
- You may begin to use a hypoallergenic moisturizing cream (no vitamin E, Mederma, or other “scar” creams) along the incision after 2 weeks.
- Take 2 over the counter calcium supplements three times daily, a total daily dose of 1500-2000 mg of calcium. You may take over-the-counter Citracal, TUMS, Viactiv, or any supplement that has 500-600 mg elemental calcium per pill. They are all equivalent.
- Take your thyroid hormone (e.g. Synthroid, Levoxyl, Cytomel) as prescribed.
- Calcium and thyroid hormone should be taken 1-2 hours apart.
- Thyroid medication should be taken on an empty stomach.

When to call the office:

- Persistent fever over 101 degrees F (39 C)
- Chills
- Persistent cough or shortness of breath
- Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Pain not relieved by medications
- Numbness or tingling in your fingers, hands, or mouth
- Redness around wound that is worsening or getting bigger
- Bleeding
- Purulent drainage (pus) of incision
- Inability to eat or drink liquids
- Difficulty swallowing
- **Difficulty breathing, CALL 911**