

## Thyroidectomy

The thyroid gland is the organ in the neck (just below the Adam's apple) that controls the body's metabolism. Thyroidectomy is the removal of all or part of the thyroid gland. Thyroidectomy is usually performed to treat hyperthyroidism, benign or malignant tumors of the thyroid.

Diagnostic test to determine the need for surgery may include: blood studies; sonograms; CT scans; needle biopsy; radioactive iodine uptake and scan. The surgery is performed in a hospital setting and usually requires an overnight stay to monitor the patient for possible complications (listed below). An incision is made in the neck following the natural skin lines. All or part of the gland is then removed. The skin is closed with sutures which can be removed about a week after surgery. A hard ridge should form along the incision line. The ridge will recede gradually as the incision site heals.

Complications include, but are not limited to: hoarseness or loss of voice (if vocal cord nerves are damaged during surgery); hypothyroidism; hypoparathyroidism, which can cause a decrease in Calcium levels and subsequent cramping in extremities; excessive bleeding; surgical wound infection and possible need for a tracheostomy.

### Call your doctor if:

- Pain, swelling, redness, drainage or bleeding increases in the surgical area.
- You develop signs of infection: headache, muscle aches, fever, dizziness or general ill feeling.
- You develop symptoms of hypothyroidism: excessive weakness, fatigue, intolerance to cold, menstrual irregularities, constipation or dry and coarse skin and hair.
- You develop symptoms of hypoparathyroidism: cramping of the extremities.

### Post-Operative Course

Depending on the extent and reason for your surgery, your surgeon may recommend that you see an Endocrinologist, who may or may not, prescribe thyroid medication. If cancer is present, but has not spread, radiation treatment may be required. You may resume normal activities as soon as possible. This helps promote healing. Bathe or shower as usual. Applying a light coat of Vitamin E ointment after suture removal may aid in healing of scar tissue. There is no special post-operative diet. Recuperation varies from patient to patient. Expect 2 to 4 weeks for full recovery.