

# Discharge Instructions for Thyroidectomy



You had surgery called thyroidectomy. This means that part or all of your thyroid gland was removed. The main job of the thyroid gland is to make thyroid hormone. This hormone controls your body's metabolism. This is the way your body creates and uses energy. Removing the thyroid gland removes your body's source of thyroid hormone. So after the surgery, you will need to take thyroid hormone pills every day. This helps keep the level of thyroid hormone in your body steady.

## Recovering after surgery

- Get plenty of rest.
- Care for your cut (incision) as directed.
- Don't do any heavy lifting and activity that uses a lot of energy for 3 to 5 weeks.
- Walk a few times daily. But don't push yourself too hard. Slowly increase how fast and how far you go, as you feel able.
- Return to work when your healthcare provider says it's OK.
- Keep a card in your wallet that lists:
  - Your name and contact information
  - Your provider's name and contact information
  - The name of your disease and the type of surgery or other treatment you have had
  - The brand name and dose of your medicine

## Taking your thyroid medicine

- Take your medicine as directed.
- Use a pillbox labeled with the days of the week. This will help you remember if you've taken your medicine each day.
- Take your medicine with a full glass of water. Try not to have food or medicine for at least 1 hour after taking the pill or 4 hours before taking the pill. The pill needs to reach your stomach and not dissolve in your throat.
- Medicines that decrease stomach acid secretion may also interfere with absorbing thyroid hormone from your stomach.
- Try to take your medicine with the same types and amounts of food and liquid each day. This helps control the amount of thyroid hormone in your system.
- After taking your medicine:
  - Wait 4 hours before eating or drinking anything that contains soy.
  - Wait 4 hours before taking certain medicines. These include:
    - Iron supplements
    - Calcium supplements

- Antacids that contain either calcium or aluminum hydroxide
  - Some medicines that lower your cholesterol
- Don't stop taking your medicine even if you become pregnant. Your dose may have to be increased during pregnancy.
- Never stop taking medicines on your own.

## Keeping your medical appointments

- See your healthcare provider for regular visits as recommended to keep track of your health.
- Have routine blood tests done. These check the level of thyroid hormone in your body. This helps your provider know to adjust the dosage of your medicine if needed. These tests are generally done no more than once every 6 weeks. Later on, you may only need blood tests once a year.
- Early after surgery, your calcium level will also need to be checked, particularly if all or most of your thyroid was removed.
- Tell your provider about any signs of further thyroid problems.
- Signs that you may have too much thyroid hormone in your body include:
  - Restlessness
  - Rapid weight loss
  - Sweating
  - Palpitations
- Signs that you may have too little thyroid hormone in your body include:
  - Extreme tiredness (fatigue) or sluggishness
  - Puffy hands, face, or feet
  - Dry, coarse, or cold skin
  - Hoarseness
  - Muscle pain
  - Slow pulse (less than 60 beats per minute)
  - For women, more bleeding during menstrual periods

## When to get medical care

Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever above 100.4°F (38°C), or as advised by your healthcare provider
- Swelling or bleeding at the incision site
- Choking
- Trouble breathing
- A sore throat that lasts longer than 7 days

- Tingling or cramps in your hands, feet, or lips
- Hoarseness that doesn't improve or that gets worse

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