



# ENDOCRINE & ONCOLOGIC SURGICAL ASSOCIATES

SPECIALIZING DISORDERS OF THE THYROID AND SURGERY FOR CANCER

## THYROIDECTOMY POST OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

### SCRIPTS FOR HOME

**SYNTHROID** (generic Levothyroxine or Levoxy): a human synthetic thyroid hormone nearly identical to that formally produced by your thyroid. Take once daily on an empty stomach, first thing in the morning is usually best. If you miss a dose, just take the scheduled dose the next day. The final proper dosage will be determined by lab work, done weeks after surgery. After the final dose is found, I am happy to give an extended prescription. Caution: many people note constipation when first starting the drug. Caution: Synthroid can also alter the dosage of the blood thinner Coumadin, please check with your doctor.

### CALCIUM AND PARATHYROID GLANDS

Symptoms of low calcium after thyroid surgery include numbness and tingling of fingers and around lips. It can progress to numbness in other parts of the body and also include muscle cramps and contractions. Certain thyroid disorders including Graves's disease and Hashimoto's Thyroiditis are often associated with short term calcium problems. If problems are going to occur, they happen within the first 72 hours after surgery. If you don't have problems by then, you probably will not. Severe cramping or problems breathing require an ED visit.

If your calcium is low post op, it is imperative that you take the following regimen until directed otherwise:

At minimum, Calcium + Vit D 2 tablets with meals and before bed

TUMS 2 tablets every hour if numbness or tingling persist

Take calcium with orange juice as the acid helps to break down calcium

Avoid diet soda as the phosphoric acid leaches calcium from the bones

Magnesium supplements 2 tabs (800 units) daily will help with calcium absorption as well as the constipation that calcium can cause

An extra Vit D supplement (at least 1000 units) daily will also help

It is not unusual to require 20-40 calcium tabs daily until the parathyroid glands adjust—you cannot overdose!

If your calcium is  $>8.5$ , you will probably not have problems, but the occasional problems can be easily dealt with by following the above advice

### INCISION CARE

The incision is covered with dermabond, waterproof glue. The more you can leave it alone, the better. Showers are OK, just pat dry. Let the glue and steri strip come off by themselves. It is usual to have the glue still sticking after 1-2 weeks. It is also normal to have a bump or raised ridge under the incision. This is called a seroma and is normal healing fluid. It will go away on its own, but it may take weeks to fully flatten. There is little that you can do that will hurt the incision. Driving, normal activity, etc. is all OK. You may want to avoid really heavy lifting or strain for about a week after surgery.

### WHAT TO EXPECT

Feelings of tiredness or exhaustion are normal for the first few weeks. Your voice may be a little raspy or deeper temporarily. You may have a feeling of a "tickle" or "something stuck" in the throat as you swallow, related to pressure from healing tissue. You may notice changes in sleeping and or bowel patterns. Essentially, your entire endocrine system has been thrown off balance temporarily. Remind yourself not to kill your family and call the office if you are worried. See you in 2 weeks!