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POST-OP INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING THYROID SURGERY

Below are general instructions for patients who have had thyroid and/or parathyroid surgery. I will discuss these with you prior to leaving the hospital.

CARING FOR YOUR WOUND

Your wound will be covered with a waterproof dressing, which I will remove when I see you for your post-operative visit, usually after 5-7 days. Feel free to have a shower and wash your hair.

It's normal for the skin above the wound to get quite puffy for the first few weeks. This always resolves. It's also normal for the wound to feel quite firm and thick for the first month but this gradually resolves over the course of 2-3 months.

The overwhelming majority of scars heal nicely however feel free to apply an anti-scar treatment such as Bio-Oil or Strataderm Gel, which you can start using two weeks after surgery.

PAIN

It's normal to experience discomfort in the wound when turning or bending your head for the first few weeks. It's also normal to feel throat irritation and a sensation of mucus in the back of your throat. This can last for about two weeks. I would encourage you to use regular Panadol or Nurofen but you will be provided with stronger painkillers when you leave hospital should they be required.

VOICE CHANGE

It's quite normal to have croakiness of the voice for the first week or two after surgery. I would encourage you to talk normally but avoid shouting or singing for at least three weeks.

ACTIVITY AFTER THYROID SURGERY

I encourage patients to get up and about when they are discharged from hospital. Feel free to go for walks, go shopping, etc. You should not participate in vigorous exercise (aerobics, running, swimming, gym work) for at least 10-14 days but I'll discuss this with you before you leave hospital.

IN AN EMERGENCY: *If you have any concerns after surgery you can contact Dr Bova in his rooms on 8382 6090*

AFTER HOURS: *You can contact Dr Bova or his ENT registrar at St Vincent's Public Hospital on 8382 1111*

THYROID HORMONE SUPPLEMENTS

If you have had a total thyroidectomy performed then you'll be prescribed thyroid hormone tablets following surgery. If you only had half your thyroid removed and your thyroid levels were normal before surgery then I will provide you with a pathology request form to obtain repeat thyroid function tests in 4-6 weeks to check that your remaining thyroid is functioning normally.

CALCIUM SUPPLEMENTS AFTER SURGERY

It's quite common after having a total thyroidectomy to develop a temporary drop in your calcium level, which can sometimes cause tingling in your fingers or around your mouth. If you have had a total thyroidectomy, you'll have your calcium checked once or twice while in hospital and you will generally be sent home on some low dose calcium supplements for five days. If your calcium level drops to a low level while you're in hospital then you may be sent home on calcium and activated vitamin D (Rocaltrol). I will provide you with instructions on when to have your calcium checked and how to slowly reduce your calcium supplements. Sometimes patients can develop a delayed drop in their calcium level and if you do develop tingling in your fingers, toes or lips when you're at home then you can always take two extra Caltrate tablets and the tingling should resolve within 30-60 minutes. If your tingling persists despite additional calcium supplements then you should attend the nearest Emergency Department to have your blood calcium levels checked.

POST-OP FOLLOW UP

I like to see patients 5-7 days after their thyroid surgery. By then, we should have the pathology report available which I will discuss with you. Your wound dressing will be removed at this first post-operative visit.