Phonosurgery: Your Care at Home after Thyroplasty

What is a Thyroplasty?
Thyroplasty is done to move your paralyzed vocal cord towards the non-paralyzed one so that the vocal cords can touch better; this allows for improved voice, swallow function and a stronger ability to cough. The paralyzed vocal cord is moved over with a permanent implant. The key part of the operation is done when you are sleepy and relaxed, but still able to respond when the doctor asks you questions to test your voice. A local numbing medicine will be given where the incision is made so you do not feel pain. You may feel some pressure or discomfort. You will be given medicine through your IV to make you relaxed. Some people remember parts of the operation.

What is the preparation like right before the procedure?
Before surgery is started, your doctor(s) will look at your voice box by passing a small flexible camera through your nose to double check which vocal cord is paralyzed. A mark on your neck will be made with a pen to verify the side that will be operated on.

How long does it take?
It takes 1.5-2 hours. You will stay overnight in the hospital.

What to expect after surgery:
- Sore throat and pain at the incision site
- You will have an incision on the front of your neck with a dressing in place.
- You may have a small drainage tube under the dressing; this will be removed the day after surgery before you go home.
- Some blood-tinged drainage is normal for the first 2-3 days.

Do I have to rest my voice after the procedure?
Yes. We usually suggest 72 hours of not talking right after the procedure to prevent bleeding and to let any minor swelling of the vocal folds decrease. That way, when you start talking after the 72 hour period, your vocal cords will have recovered somewhat.

Will my voice be better right after the voice rest period?
No. The recovery of your voice happens with time. Your voice will likely be worse before it gets better so having some patience is important. If your voice is not improving then you should let us know.

How important is it to work with the voice therapist (Speech-Language Pathologist)?
It is very important! It is critical to learn skills from them and listen to their expert advice on how to restore your voice. If you can combine what they teach you, you will be less frustrated and have a faster recovery and a better outcome. Meeting with them before and after the procedure will assure your best outcome.
Home Care and Restrictions

Activity:
- No strenuous activity or contact sports for at least 2 weeks. No lifting more than 25 pounds or straining for 2 weeks.
- For 3 days after surgery, keep your head elevated at least 30° on 2-3 pillows when sleeping or resting. Do not lay flat in bed.
- Follow voice rest restrictions as instructed by your surgeon or speech therapist.
- Avoid extremes of loudness and pitch.
- Do not whisper; this can promote abnormal vocal behaviors which makes getting your voice back more difficult.
- Avoid coughing and throat clearing.

Diet:
- Drink plenty of fluids, even if you are not able to eat much solid food. Advance your diet slowly from liquids to soft foods.
- It may be better to avoid spicy foods for 2-3 days after surgery.
- Eat slowly to avoid choking or coughing.

Medication:
- Be sure to take your reflux medicine if prescribed.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be taken as needed for pain. Do not take anti-inflammatory medicine such as Ibuprofen or Aleve for 2 days after surgery.
- Use the pain medicine you are perscribed, if needed.

Wound Care:
- You may shower and get your incision wet 48 hours after surgery. Do not soak your incision or submerge your neck under water until your incision is completely healed.
- Clean around your incision with mild soap and water, rinse and pat dry.
- You can leave your incision open to the air.
- If you have stitches, they will be removed at your first post op visit.
- Check your incision daily for any signs of infection.
  - Redness
  - Increased swelling
  - Worsening pain
  - Warmth at the incision site
  - Pus-like drainage
  - Fever over 100.5, checked 2 readings 4 hours apart

When do I call the doctor?
- If you have trouble breathing go to the nearest Emergency Department or call 911.
- If you have pain not relieved with pain medicine.
- If you cough up bright red blood or blood clots.
- If you have any sign of infection at the incision site.

What about follow-up visits?
You will see a Speech-Language Pathologist about one week after surgery and have a member of the ENT clinic check your neck. A full follow up with your doctor and a Speech-Language Pathologist will take place about 6 weeks after the operation.
Phone numbers

If you have any questions or problems once you are home, please call:

ENT Clinic, Monday - Friday, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM at (608) 263-6190.

After hours, weekends or holidays, the clinic number will give you the paging operator.

Ask for the ENT doctor on call. Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

If you live out of the area, call 1-800-323-8942.