Parathyroid Surgery

Parathyroid glands are found near the thyroid. Normally, these 4 glands are each the size of a grain of rice. They make a hormone that tells the body how much calcium to store in the bones and how much to have in the blood.

When these glands enlarge they can send out too much hormone. This is hyperparathyroidism. When this happens, too much calcium is in the blood and not enough is in the bones. This can cause the bones to become weak or may cause kidney stones. The only way to treat this is to remove the abnormal gland(s).

Your doctor will talk with you about the benefits and risks of surgery. You will have a small wound in your neck, ½ - 2 inches long. It will be in the middle of your neck or to the side hidden in a natural line or crease. You will have a local or general anesthesia during surgery. Surgery lasts 30-90 minutes. You will go home the same day or you may stay in the hospital for one night.

**Surgery**
Before surgery you may be given an injection in your IV. This helps your surgeon locate the abnormal parathyroid gland with the probe. Once the gland is taken out, we take a small blood sample from your arm or foot to check the parathyroid hormone level. A decrease means all abnormal parathyroid tissue is gone.

**How will I feel after surgery?**
Your throat may be sore when you swallow. This is normal. This can last 1-2 days.

You may feel like you have a lump in your throat when you swallow. This will get better after a few days but can last up to 6-8 weeks after surgery.

Your voice may be hoarse or you may feel that your voice gets tired. These changes can last for 1-2 weeks.

The back of your neck may be sore from the position of your head during surgery. It may feel better to use 1-2 pillows in bed. Using a heating pad on the back of your neck might also help.

Sometimes patients feel a pulling in the neck muscles. This will get better in 3-4 weeks.

You may have an IV placed in your arm or foot during surgery to draw parathyroid hormone blood levels. This area could be sore or have some bruising.

A mild form of low blood calcium can cause numbness and tingling in your face, lips, fingertips, or toes. If this occurs you should chew **Tums® 1500-2000 mg**. Chewable calcium works best as it is absorbed quicker than calcium in a pill form. The numbness and tingling should go away in 30 minutes after you take the Tums. If it does not go away in 30 minutes chew more **Tums®1500- 2000 mg**. If the symptoms still do not go away 30 minutes after the second dose of Tums®, please call us.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Tums®</th>
<th>Milligrams per tablet</th>
<th>Number of Tums® to take to get 1500-2000 mg</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Regular strength</td>
<td><strong>500 mg</strong></td>
<td><strong>3-4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Freshers®</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Extra strength</td>
<td><strong>750 mg</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Smoothies, -Kids</td>
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<tr>
<td>-Ultra strength</td>
<td><strong>1000 mg</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>-Chewy Delights®</td>
<td><strong>1200 mg</strong></td>
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High parathyroid hormone (PTH) in your blood has been stealing calcium from your bones for a long time, so it is important to replace that calcium after surgery. This is a long, slow process which doesn’t happen right away. We suggest that you take a daily, over-the-counter calcium with vitamin D for at least 6 months after surgery. This is in addition to Tums that you might take in the first few weeks for the symptoms described above. We recommend 500-600 mg of calcium twice daily and 800 -1,000 international units of vitamin D daily for most people, but if you have very low levels of vitamin D, we may prescribe even more.

Calcium and prescription pain pills can be constipating. To prevent this problem, you may want to take a stool softener each day that you use prescription pain pills and until you have your first bowel movement after your surgery. You may want to start with Peri-Colace®. Take Peri-Colace® (docusate sodium 50 mg; sennosides 8.6 mg) two tablets, one to two times a day as needed for constipation. Follow the package directions.

**How do I care for my wound?**
Your wound is closed with glue. If you have Steri-strips (pieces of tape) covering the incision, leave the tape on until your next doctor visit. Curled tape edges may be trimmed with small scissors. Keep the wound clean and dry. The glue is waterproof. It is OK to shower.

Look at your wound daily, check for signs of an infection.
- Spreading redness or swelling
- Foul-smelling drainage or pus
- A fever (more than 101°F by mouth)

**What about pain?**
Expect that your wound will be tender. You will have prescription pain pills to use at home. You may take Tylenol® instead of the prescription pain pills. You can also use an ice pack to the incision area which can help reduce both pain and swelling. You can start taking ibuprofen 24 hours after surgery.

**When can I eat?**
When you get home, you may want to eat cold, soft foods and cold clear liquids until your throat feels better.

**When can I take a bath?**
You can shower the day after surgery. No swimming or soaking in water for 14 days.

**When can I drive?**
No driving for 24 hours after surgery, the drugs we used to put you to sleep are still in your body. No driving when you are taking prescription pain pills. You can drive when you are not taking prescription pain medicine and when you can easily turn your head from side to side.

**When can I exercise?**
Light exercise is fine. Avoid strenuous exercise for the first week after surgery. Avoid straining or extreme bending of your neck. Do not lift more than 20 pounds the first week.

**When can I return to work?**
Most people return to work in one week. If your job requires regular heavy lifting, you may require 2 weeks off. Please discuss this with your surgeon.

**When should I get help?**
- This is rare, but if you have trouble breathing, a sudden swelling in your throat, or cannot swallow, Call 911.
- Numbness or tingling in your fingertips, face, lips, or toes that does not go away after two doses of Tums®.
- Pain that does not get better with narcotic pain pills.
- Signs of infection like spreading redness or swelling, foul-smelling drainage or pus.
- Temperature greater than 101°F.
- Any other symptoms that concern you.

How do I call the doctor if I do not have an emergency?
- If your surgery was at **UW Hospital and Clinics**: (608) 263-7502. This is a 24-hour number.
- If your surgery was at **The American Center**: (608) 440-6300. This is a 24-hour number.
- Call **UW Health Toll free at**: 1-800-323-8942. Ask the operator to transfer you to the facility where you had your surgery.
- If your surgery was at Meriter or Madison Surgery Center call (608) 287-2100. This is a 24-hour number.

Spanish version of this Health Facts for Your is #5665s

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2016. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5665