



MY ENT SPECIALIST
Experts that Care

Parathyroidectomy - Post operative instructions

Before your surgery

- You will need to take around 2 weeks off work. It is normal to feel tired for the first few weeks after a parathyroidectomy.
- If you have young children, see if you can arrange some help for the week following your surgery.
- **Blood thinning medications** such as Aspirin, Plavix, Xarelta or Warfarin, you will need to stop them before the operation please call our nurse for advice ASAP before your surgery.

After your surgery

What should I expect?

- **A neck wound** you will have a small wound around 3-4 cm long in the lower part of the neck. This is generally closed with dissolving stitches and should be covered with a waterproof dressing for the first week.
- **Drains** – this is a thin plastic tube that takes away blood and fluids from the wound it is generally removed 1-2 days after the surgery. Having your drain removed will not hurt.
- **Discomfort** most patients do not find parathyroidectomy particularly painful but some swelling and bruising in the week or two after an operation is normal this can be managed with mild painkillers such as Nurofen and or Panadol.
- **Calcium Levels.** The **parathyroid glands** make a hormone called **parathyroid hormone** or **PTH**, which controls the amount of calcium in your bloodstream. Generally one of the glands makes too much PTH which can raise the blood calcium and thin your bones. After we remove the overactive gland rarely and usually temporarily you can develop symptoms of low calcium. If this

happens we may need to give you extra calcium tablets for a few weeks.

- ***The symptoms of low calcium are tingling or numbness in your fingers, toes and lips and cramps and spasms of your toes and fingers. If you develop any of these symptoms you should take three caltrate tablets immediately. If the symptoms do not settle within 30 minutes you should attend your nearest emergency Department. If the symptoms settle then increase your caltrate dose to 3 tablets three times daily and call the rooms for advice.***
- **Voice changes.** It is common for the voice to be a little croaky for the first few days following a parathyroid operation. This does not mean that the nerves supplying your voicebox have been damaged.

Complications of surgery

Parathyroidectomy is very safe but like all operations there are some complications.

- **Bruising bleeding and swelling** – this is generally mild but in some cases can be more serious. If you develop any major swelling following your surgery please call the rooms for advice. Soft painless swelling is often the result of fluid accumulation called a seroma and can often be dealt with in the rooms.
- **Infections** – infections following parathyroid surgery are extremely rare. However if you develop a swollen or discharging wound or increasing pain in your neck you should call us.
- **Low calcium levels** – see above

- **Recurrent laryngeal nerve injury** – in expert hands there is an extremely low risk of damage to the nerves that move your voicebox. 1 in 100 patients undergoing parathyroidectomy can be affected but only one in a thousand have any symptoms of permanent voice problems. If both of the recurrent laryngeal nerves stop working then the voicebox cannot open for you to breathe. This would require a temporary tracheostomy or breathing tube. However Dr McGuinness uses electrical vocal cord monitoring, which means that the risk of this happening is very low indeed.
- ***If you develop any breathing difficulties following surgery call the rooms immediately or go to your nearest emergency department***

Post Operative Care

- Take your **Caltrate** if prescribed
- **Post-operative blood tests** – you will need a blood test to check on your calcium and PTH two days before your review appointment. The hospital should give you the forms for this. If they do not please call the rooms.
- **Postoperative review** – this is generally made for two weeks following the surgery. Our nurse will call you to see how you are progressing and also to make you an appointment. If you have not heard from us within five days please call the rooms.

Useful Numbers

Dr John McGuinness

Rooms (office hours)	1300 3620715
Nurse (8am- 8pm)	0418 824 652
Campbelltown Private	4621 9111
Lifehouse at RPA	8514 1850
L'pool Public-ENT Registrar	9828 3000
St George Private	9598 5555
St George Public- ENT	9113 1111