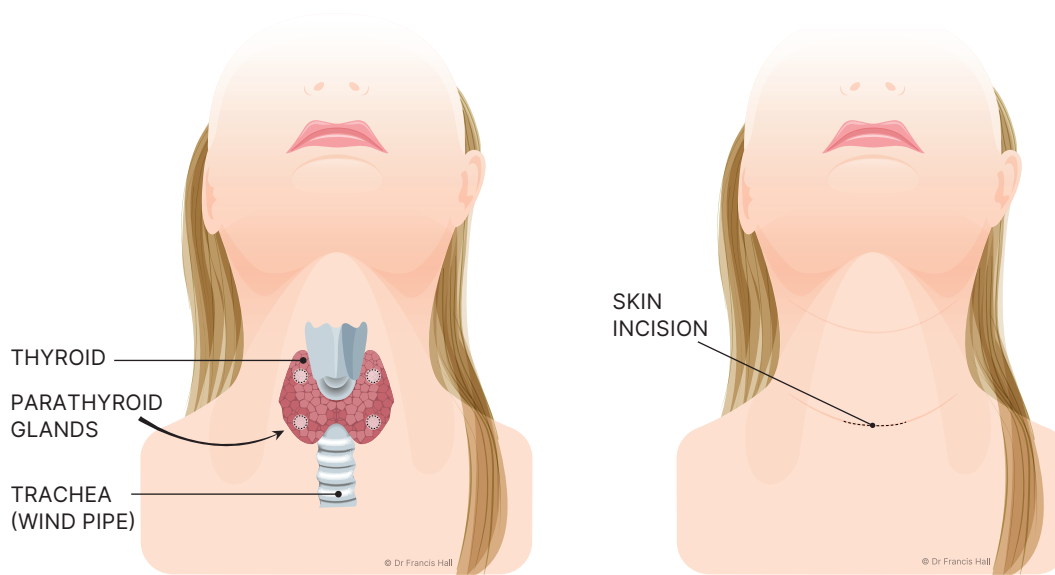




Dr. *Francis* T. Hall

EAR, NOSE, THROAT, HEAD & NECK

Thyroidectomy care



The thyroid gland produces a hormone (thyroxine) that is important for metabolism and growth. Thyroidectomy is the name of the operation when either all (total thyroidectomy) or half (hemithyroidectomy) of the thyroid gland is removed. Thyroidectomy is performed to treat thyroid cancer, noncancerous enlargement of the thyroid (goitre) and overactive thyroid (hyperthyroidism). It may also be recommended for suspicious thyroid nodules that cannot be determined as cancerous or noncancerous after a needle biopsy.

This care sheet gives you a general idea about how long it will take for you to recover. But each person recovers at a different pace. Follow the steps below to feel better as quickly as possible.

How can you care for yourself at home?

What to expect:

- You may have a sore throat after surgery. The tube the anaesthetist puts down your throat to help you breathe during surgery often irritates the throat and sometimes causes a hoarse voice after surgery. Thankfully the sore throat usually resolves quickly in 2-3 days. You should drink plenty of fluids, and it may be helpful to take throat lozenges to relieve your symptoms.
- Some people have a stiff sore neck after surgery. This is due to the position that you were in during surgery. Please stretch the neck by looking up at the ceiling and also rotating your head from side to side several times each day. This helps stretch the muscles and return things back to normal.
- Some people feel a tightness over their throat at the site of the operation. This usually resolves over a few weeks and the same stretching exercises mentioned above help this too.
- Some people find swallowing is different for a few weeks after surgery. This usually also resolves over a few weeks and once again stretching exercises help.
- It is usual to feel tired after surgery. Some of this tiredness is due to the operation and some is due to the general anaesthetic. Rest up, get some light daily exercise and the tiredness will quickly resolve.

Activity

- Do not drive in the 24 hours following your surgery.
- Dr Hall recommends taking 1-2 weeks off work following thyroidectomy.
- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk.
- In order to reduce the chance of bleeding, avoid strenuous activities, such as bicycle riding, jogging, weight lifting, or aerobic exercise, for 2 to 3 weeks.
- Refrain from heavy lifting (greater than 7kg) in the first 2 weeks following surgery.

Diet:

- Resume your regular diet, there are no dietary restrictions.

Shower/ bathing:

- Please keep the incision dry and shower from the neck down for the first two days after surgery. You may shower or bath as usual three days after surgery.

Pain medicines:

- Take pain medicines exactly as directed (Dr Hall will prescribe).
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
 - Take your pain medicine after meals (unless Dr Hall has told you not to).
 - Ask Dr Hall for a different pain medicine.

Thyroid tablets:

- If you have had all your thyroid gland removed (total thyroidectomy or completion thyroidectomy) you will need to take thyroid hormone tablets (thyroxine). Dr Hall will prescribe this for you.
- Thyroxine should be taken on an empty stomach (1 hour before your meal or 2 hours after your meal).
- A blood test is done in 4 weeks' time to check that you are on the right dose of thyroxine for your body.

Calcium tablets:

- Some patients need calcium tablets following total thyroidectomy or completion thyroidectomy. If you need calcium tablets Dr Hall will prescribe this for you.
- Often vitamin D tablets (calcitriol) are prescribed at the same time as the calcium tablets.
- The calcium and calcitriol tablets are taken to treat or prevent a low calcium level in your blood.
- If you have been prescribed calcium and / or calcitriol tablets please take as directed.
- If you develop tingling in your fingers or lips or muscle cramps please call Dr Hall on 021 733 677.
- Dr Hall will advise you when to get blood tests to check the calcium and parathyroid hormone level.
- Usually, calcium and calcitriol tablets can be stopped after a few weeks. Dr Hall will advise you when you can stop these tablets. Please follow his advice.

Incision care:

- Your wound is covered with Steri Strips. Steri Strips are thin adhesive strips which are placed over your incision to help it heal. Keep the Steri Strips dry for the first 48 hours; then you may gently cleanse the area daily with soap and water. You should avoid scrubbing or rubbing the incision site. Leave the Steri Strips in place until they fall off on their own. They will usually fall off the skin within 10 to 14 days. Try to keep them dry as much as possible to prevent infection.
- Your stitches are below the skin (subcuticular) and are dissolvable.
- In the first two days following surgery, keep the incision dry. After two days you can get the incision wet. Remember to pat the incision dry after you shower and not to rub the incision.

- Keep sun off your wound for 6 months. This avoids the wound going a dark colour (post inflammatory hyperpigmentation). There are three ways to keep the sun off the wound: wear clothing that covers the area, use sunblock or simply cover the wound with tape. Dr Hall recommends ½ inch light brown micropore tape (a 3M product). You can buy this product from most pharmacies.

When do I get my results?

- Usually, the pathologist sends a typed signed report to Dr Hall about one to two weeks after the surgery. Occasionally it may take the pathologist longer to issue a report either because of the complexity of your case or because of a higher than usual workload. Dr Hall will contact you by phone or text once he receives the pathologist's report in his inbox.

Follow up appointment:

- Dr Hall usually sees his thyroidectomy patients 1-2 weeks after surgery. His secretary Rebecca will arrange your follow up appointment for you. If you have not heard from Rebecca within one week of your surgery, please contact her on 09 281 2963.

Things to look out for

- If there is sudden swelling of your neck call Dr Francis Hall immediately on 021 733 677 and go direct to your nearest emergency department.
- If you develop tingling around your lips or in your fingers call Dr Hall.
- If you develop cramps in your muscles call Dr Hall.
- If your incision is getting more sore or more red over a few days call Dr Hall.

Any problems call or text Dr Francis Hall on 021 733 677

Dr.  T. Hall