



Discharge Instructions for Thyroidectomy

You had surgery called thyroidectomy. This means that part or all of your thyroid gland was removed. The main job of the thyroid gland is to make thyroid hormone. This hormone controls your body's metabolism. This is the way your body creates and uses energy. Removing the thyroid gland removes your body's source of thyroid hormone. So after the surgery, you will need to take thyroid hormone pills every day. This helps keep the level of thyroid hormone in your body steady.

Recovering after surgery

- Get plenty of rest.
- Care for your incision as directed.
- Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activity for three to five weeks.
- Walk a few times daily. But don't push yourself too hard. Slowly increase your pace and distance, as you feel able.
- Return to work when your doctor says it's OK.

Taking your thyroid medicine

- Take your medicine as directed.
- Use a pillbox labeled with the days of the week. This will help you remember whether you've taken your medicine each day.
- Take your medicine with a full glass of water and preferably no other food or medicine for at least one hour after or four hours before taking the pill. The pill needs to reach your stomach and not dissolve in your throat.
- Try to take your medicine with the same types and amounts of food and liquid each day. This helps control the amount of thyroid hormone in your system.
- After taking your medicine:
 - Wait four hours before eating or drinking anything that contains soy.
 - Wait four hours before taking certain medicine. These include:
 - Iron supplements
 - Calcium supplements
 - Antacids that contain either calcium or aluminum hydroxide
 - Medicines that lower your cholesterol
- Do not stop taking your medicine even if you become pregnant. Your dose may have to be increased during pregnancy.
- Never stop taking medicines on your own.

Keeping your doctor's appointments

- See your doctor for regular visits. These are needed to monitor your health.
- Have routine blood tests done. These check the level of thyroid hormone in your body. This helps your doctor know whether to adjust the dosage of your medicine if needed. These tests are generally done no more than once every six weeks. Later on, you may only need blood tests once a year.
- Early after surgery, your calcium level will also need to be checked, particularly if all or most of your thyroid was removed.
- Tell your doctor about any signs of further thyroid problems.
- Signs that you may have too much thyroid hormone in your body include:
 - Restlessness
 - Rapid weight loss
 - Sweating
 - Palpitations

- Signs that you may have too little thyroid hormone in your body include:
 - Fatigue or sluggishness
 - Puffy hands, face or feet
 - Dry, course skin
 - Hoarseness
 - Muscle pain
 - Slow pulse (less than 60 beats per minute)

When to seek medical care

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:

- Fever above 100.4°F (38°C)
- Swelling or bleeding at the incision site
- Choking
- Trouble breathing
- A sore throat that lasts longer than seven days
- Tingling or cramps in your hands, feet or lips



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