

SUNY Upstate Medical University



**University  
Hospital**

# **After Thyroid or Parathyroid Surgery**

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# Calcium

One of the side effects of surgery is that your calcium may drop a little. It is important that you know what to do if your calcium level drops.

## How will you know if your calcium is low?

You will feel numbness or tingling in your hands, face, mouth, or feet. For example, your hands may feel like they have fallen asleep. Other things can cause this feeling, but one of the most common causes of this feeling is hypoventilation or breathing fast.

## What can I do?

The first thing to try is to slowly breathe in and out of a paper bag 10 to 12 times. This will help the tingling go away. It is important to try to remain calm.

## What if the tingling doesn't go away?

1. First, you will need to take 12 TUMS over about 2 hours.
  2. The next day you will need to take a total of 11 TUMS spaced out over the day for the next 24 hours. Do not take all 11 TUMS at once or close in time.
  3. You will need to decrease the TUMS by one pill everyday until you are down to one pill, then you can stop them. You will need to continue spacing the pills throughout the day.
- If you have trouble taking the pills, then you can dissolve all of them at the same time in some juice. Drink the juice with the pills dissolved in it, either as instructed in step one (over the two hours) or as instructed in step 2 or step 3.
  - If the numbness or tingling comes back go back to taking 12 TUMS a day. Call the office so we can give you further instructions.
  - Diuretics (water pills) can lower your calcium as well as potassium levels. If potassium medication was ordered you will need to continue taking as you were instructed.

## Activity

You may feel tired for a few days. You may find yourself sleeping a little more than usual once you are home. This is normal, because you just had surgery with general anesthesia. You can do your normal activities as soon as you feel able to do so. Remember you just had surgery so do not push yourself.

## **When can I drive?**

You may resume driving when you can turn your head from side to side without pain, **and** are no longer taking any prescription pain medicine.

## **When can I go back to work?**

Most people feel well enough to go back to work 10 to 14 days after surgery. If your job requires you to do a lot of talking then you may need more time off. Everyone is different in the amount of time needed before they feel like going back to work. Please discuss this with us if you have any questions about this.

## **Incision Healing**

You may take the tapes off your incision in 5 to 7 days. The best way to remove the tapes is to get them wet while bathing and then peel them off. After the tapes are removed, it is OK to use any kind of skin lotion. Some people like to use lotion that contains aloe or vitamin E.

You may shower the day after you go home. Gently pat your neck dry.

If the incision itches try ice or cold pack for relief. Do not scratch the incision. Scratching a scar is bad for the healing process.

Do not get the incision sunburned for at least one year, as that would leave you with a worse scar. It takes up to one year for an incision to heal and for the skin to remodel itself.

## **“Lumps and Bumps”**

You may notice that you develop a firmness or lumps under your incision. This is normal and is caused from the tissue healing. The area may be firm for up to two months. This will steadily improve.

Sometimes the wound will drain a fluid that is either black colored (old dried blood), yellow, or cloudy looking. If this happens wash it off with a clean cloth. If this persists after the initial discharge of fluid you need to call us.

You may also feel like there is a lump in your throat when you swallow. It may also feel like your throat is tight. This can happen when you eat large pieces of meat or raw fruits and vegetables. This feeling will gradually get better.

Bruising on the neck and chest or under the breast bone is common after surgery. This may cause your skin in that area to look yellow. It may also feel like a dull ache under your upper breast bone. This will gradually go away. If

you have a history of heart disease or angina, then this will generally feel different than that type of pain.

**If you develop chest pain, angina or sudden shortness of breath this could be a medical emergency. Call 464.4550 or 911 or go to an Emergency Room. Do not wait.**

## **Muscle Aches**

The back of your neck may be stiff even though we are very careful during surgery with your position. This happens because your head is tipped back during the surgery.

Massage or heating packs are helpful for muscle aches. Sometimes switching between heat or cold packs helps. Be careful to not burn yourself from either type of pack.

Anti-inflammatory medicines such as Ibuprofen (Advil), or acetaminophen (Tylenol) may be helpful.

**Do not take aspirin** as this may increase bruising. If you normally take an aspirin a day for other reasons, it is okay to resume this when you get home.

If you use an anti-inflammatory medicine, you should not take it on an empty stomach. Also make sure you follow the directions on the bottle. This type of medicine can cause ulcers and gastrointestinal bleeding if used too often.

## **Voice Resting**

Many people are somewhat hoarse, or get hoarse easily after surgery. The operation on the thyroid or parathyroid glands temporarily disrupts the drainage of fluid from the tissues in and around your windpipe, so a lot of swelling occurs which can easily make your voice hoarse.

The anesthesia tube in the windpipe, that allows for you to have a safe surgery while you are asleep, may cause some swelling. Also, the recurrent laryngeal nerve that controls your vocal cords has to be freed from the tissue around it, and may not work perfectly for a while. This can also make your voice hoarse.

If you experience any hoarseness, it should resolve in about one month, unless you are using your voice a lot. Gargling with warm water several times a day may help to improve the hoarseness.

You can use your voice normally, but try not to overuse it by shouting, singing, or talking for long periods of time. It will be hard for you to sing, shout, or talk for long periods of time for about one month. If you overuse your voice during this period, you may end up with chronic hoarseness.

People who work in jobs where they would overuse their voice, such as telephone operators, or class room teachers, may need one month off. Voice aids such as lapel portable microphones may assist teachers in returning to work earlier. Periods of voice rest during the day may also help with this.

Singers may need to re-train their voice and will have trouble with range and voice projection for at least one month.

## **Swimming**

You may swim in pools 48 hours after surgery, and in fresh water such as a lakes or rivers 7 days after surgery.

## **Calcium Supplement**

Your calcium level when you left the hospital was

**Normal / Below Normal**

You need to **(take/not take)** a supplement of:

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You will be told to either, **(check / not check)** your calcium level in 4 days. If you need to check your level, then tear off the lab slip that is attached, and your lab will do this for you when you bring in the requisition.

If you have the calcium drawn and you haven't heard from us in 1 – 2 days, please call the lab and make sure they faxed the results to our office at:

**Dr. Kort (315) 464.6250**

**Dr. Numann (315) 464.6365**

The office will call to tell you what to do with your calcium supplement after we receive the report.

# Doctor's Appointment

Mostly likely you were given a follow-up appointment with us for about one month after your surgery. If not, call the office secretary to schedule a post-op appointment. They may be reached at:

**Dr. Numann (315) 464.4603**

**Dr. Kort (315) 464.6313**

Our secretaries can also assist you about questions you may have about your insurance, or appointments.

You will need to call the secretaries for filling a prescription, getting an appointment, or for your pathology report.

After 5 pm, if there is an EMERGENCY, the answering service # is (315) 464.4550 only. If you have trouble reaching us at the above numbers, then call University Hospital at (315) 464.5540, and ask to speak to the Resident covering 5B. The residents can not help you will filling a prescription, getting an appointment, or for your pathology report.

## YOUR POST OP APPOINTMENT:

With **Dr. Numann** **Dr. Kort** (Please circle one)  
In Room 4800 is on **Tues** **Thurs** \_\_\_\_\_

We value your feedback, and if you feel there is anything that may help us to serve our patients better, please let us know. Thank you for allowing us to assist you.

Patricia J. Numann, MD

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University Hospital  
Upstate Medical University  
Department of Surgery

*Tear this page off for lab*

**FAX URGENT to:  
(315) 464.6365 - Dr. Numann  
(315)464.6250 - Dr. Kort**

**Serum Calcium/ TSH**

(Circle one of the above)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**ICD#9 Codes**

Hyperparathyroid . . . . . 252.0

Multinodular goiter . . . . . 241.1

Thyroid nodule . . . . . 241.0

Hyperthyroid . . . . . 242.9

Thyroid Cancer . . . . . 193.0

Hashimoto's . . . . . 245.2

Hypoparathyroid . . . . . 252.1

If Calcium is <7.8, or >12, then please call the office at:

(315) 464.4603 - Dr. Numann      (315) 464.6313 - Dr. Kort

MD/NP Signature \_\_\_\_\_

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