

## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

### TOTAL THYROIDECTOMY

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#### What can I expect after the operation?

- The **incision** is usually 5-6cm and is in a skin crease in the lower neck
- You may have a **drain** coming out of the neck to collect excess fluid. If used, this drain is usually removed the day after the operation
- You will need daily **thyroid hormone replacement** for the rest of your life
- Your calcium levels are measured in the recovery and then twice daily until they are stable. If they are low you will be commenced on **calcium replacement**
- You will generally be in hospital **for 1-2 nights**.
- It is not a particularly painful operation.

#### What are the risks of the operation?

- General risks of any operation- bleeding, infection, presence of a scar
  - The risk of bleeding is greatest in the first 24 hours hence why you are observed overnight in the hospital
- Recurrent laryngeal nerve weakness. Each nerve supplies one half of the voice box. It is responsible for vocal cord movement. Injury to this nerve causes a weak or hoarse voice. It is usually temporary but may be permanent. It is my practice to assess the vocal cord function before and after surgery. Injury to both nerves is rare
- Low calcium. The blood supply to the parathyroid glands can be compromised during this operation. This results in low calcium. Temporary low calcium is seen in 15-20% of patients, permanently low calcium levels, requiring long-term supplementation, are seen in 2-4% of patients

#### What should I do after leaving the hospital?

- Keep the incision dry for 72 hours. After that time you can get it wet and get soap running over it in the shower. Pat it dry with a towel
- Avoid strenuous exercise in the first two weeks after the operation
- You can recommence a normal diet immediately.

#### What do I need to look out for when I'm at home?

- Any swelling in the region of the operation
- Any redness over the wound that is also hot may indicate the presence of a wound infection. This is rare however
- Read the scar management information sheet available on the website: [www.ForemanENT.com.au](http://www.ForemanENT.com.au) (under 'Patient Information')

#### When do I have follow-up?

- Your first appointment will generally be 1 week after surgery
- This appointment allows me to assess the incision, remove any sutures and also the pathology from the operation will be available for us to discuss
- I will also perform nasoendoscopy again to assess the function of the vocal cords

If you have any problems please contact me on 0413 310 971 or 7200 2539.  
Please note the mobile number is **only** for use during the post-operative period



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