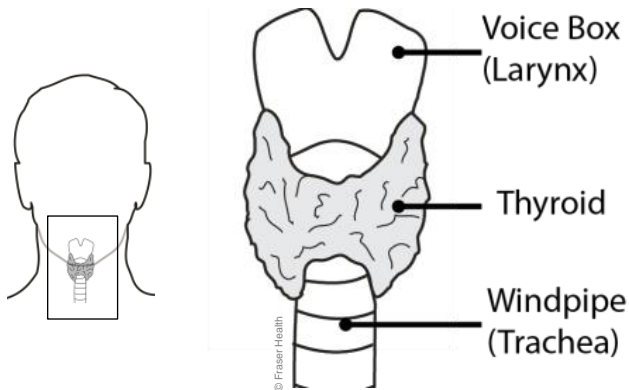


Thyroid Surgery

Your Surgery and Recovery at Home

I am having:

- My whole thyroid removed (total thyroidectomy)
- Part of my thyroid removed (partial thyroidectomy)



The thyroid gland (or part of it) can be removed for a couple of reasons, including a growth (tumour) that could be cancer or not (benign).

The surgeon makes a cut (incision) on the front of your neck. You will have an incision 2.5 to 5 centimetres (1 to 2 inches) long. The surgery usually takes about 1 to 2 hours.

You usually go home the same day or the next day. This depends on the type of surgery, your health before surgery, and your recovery.

Depending on the type of surgery, you might need to take a thyroid hormone pill every day for life.

Appointments after surgery

See your family practitioner 7 to 10 days after surgery

My appointment is on: _____

See your surgeon 3 to 4 weeks after surgery.

My appointment is on: _____

Going home checklist

- You have a ride home and someone to stay with you for 24 hours, or longer if needed.
- You know what medicine(s) to take, as well as when and how to take them.
- You know what you cannot do for 24 hours (because of anesthetic) including:
 - * not driving or operating hazardous machinery
 - * not drinking alcohol or using any substance or street drug
 - * not making important decisions or signing legal documents

Family practitioner – Refers to family doctor or nurse practitioner

Caring for Yourself at Home

Drinking and Eating

For the first 24 hours, you might find you can only drink liquids because your throat is sore or a little swollen. Cool or cold fluids help reduce swelling. Once swallowing is easier, you can return to your normal diet.

You might feel sick to your stomach (nausea) or throw up (vomit). This should not last long. It is important to stay hydrated. If you feel sick or throw up:

- Drink 'flat' ginger ale, clear soups, and clear fluids, and eat mild foods until you feel better. Other good choices include dry toast, crackers, popsicles, and gelatin dessert (such as Jell-O). Stay away from caffeine, carbonated soft drinks, and acidic fruit juices while feeling sick.
- Drink and eat small amounts often.
- Rest in bed until you feel better. Place a cool, damp cloth on your face and back of neck.
- Try not to smoke or be around smoking. Smoke can make your nausea worse.

You might get constipated because you are less active, eating less fibre, or taking opioid pain medication. To prevent constipation:

- Drink at least 6 to 8 glasses of liquid each day (unless you have been told differently because of a medical condition).
- Eat high fibre foods such as bran, prunes, whole grains, vegetables, and fruit.
- Walk and move around as much as you can.

If you continue to be constipated, talk with a pharmacist or family practitioner about taking a laxative.

Your incision

Always wash your hands before and after touching around your incision.

You can shower the day after surgery. Try not to let the shower spray directly on your incision. Gently pat the area dry.

Until the incision is healed:

- * No soaking in a bathtub or hot tub up to your neck.
- * No swimming.
- * No creams, lotions, or ointments on the incision (unless directed by your surgeon).

Activity and Rest

Balance your activity and rest for the first few days. Try to get 8 hours of sleep each day. Take rest breaks during the day, as needed.

You might find the muscles in your neck are sore and stiff. When lying in bed or on the couch, you might be more comfortable with your head high on 2 or more pillows.

You will probably have a hoarse voice for a couple of days. This is because the surgery is so close to your voice box (larynx). Your voice should return to normal in 1 to 2 days.

You can usually return to driving 1 week after surgery, when you can shoulder check and do emergency braking. If you are not sure about driving, check with your surgeon.

Do not drive or drink alcohol if you are taking an opioid medication.

For 2 to 3 weeks after surgery:

- * **Do not** lift, push, or pull anything over 5 kilograms (10 pounds), including carrying children and groceries.
- * **Do not** play any sports.

Managing pain

If you have been living with pain before surgery, be sure to tell your surgeon how you manage this pain, such as with medicines, herbs, supplements, cannabis products, other substances, massage, yoga, meditation, etc. This helps your surgeon create the best plan with you for managing pain after surgery.

Your surgeon gives you instructions to take pain medicine. This might include a prescription for an opioid (narcotic).

Your pain should be at a comfortable level that allows you to move, take deep breaths, cough, and to do every day activities. Take your pain medicine regularly for the first day or so, even if you have just a little pain. Also do other things to help ease your pain or distract you from the pain, such as slow breathing, listening to music, watching T.V.

Non-prescription pain medicines:

- acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)

Examples: ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®)
 naproxen (Naprosyn, Aleve®)

NSAIDs are not for everyone after surgery. If you have (or have had) health problems such as stomach ulcers, kidney disease, or a heart condition, speak with your surgeon or family practitioner before using NSAIDs.

Prescription pain medicines with opioids (narcotics):

- Tramacet® (tramadol and acetaminophen)
- Tylenol #3® (codeine and acetaminophen)
- Oxycocet® / Percocet® (oxycodone and acetaminophen)

Note: These medications also have 300 to 325mg acetaminophen in each tablet. All total, **do not** take more than 4000mg of acetaminophen in 24 hours (too much can harm your liver).

Safe use of opioid pain medicines

If you are using any medicines that have opioids (narcotics) in them, take note of the following safety information.

- Tell your surgeon if you have sleep apnea. Opioids can make your sleep apnea worse.
- Your pain should lessen over the first week. You should not need to take opioid pain medicine for more than 1 week.
- Always use the least amount possible for the shortest amount of time.
- Common side effects include constipation, feeling sick to your stomach (nausea), a dry mouth, sweating, dizziness, and feeling drowsy.

- **Do not** crush, cut, break, chew, or dissolve opioids before taking. Doing this could cause serious harm, even death.
- While taking opioid pain medicines, **do not** drive, drink alcohol, or start taking any new sleeping pills.
- Store opioid medicines in a secure place. Keep out of sight and out of reach of children, teens, and pets.
- Never share your opioid medicine with anyone else.
- Take any unused opioid medicines back to your pharmacy to be safely disposed.
Do not keep unused medicines at home.

Always read the label and/or information from the pharmacist about how to take medication safely.

Questions about medications? Speak to your local pharmacist. After-hours, call 8-1-1 and ask to speak to a pharmacist.

When to get help

Call your surgeon or family practitioner

if you have any of the following:

- nausea or throwing up not going away
- a dry mouth, only passing a little dark urine, and feeling thirsty
- a fever over 38°C (101°F)
- warm, red, swollen incision, or blood or pus (yellow/green fluid) draining from the area
- pain does not ease with pain medicine, or stops you from moving or recovering
- problems swallowing longer than 2 days
- tightness around the neck

Can't contact your surgeon or family practitioner?

Have any questions about your recovery?

- **Call 8-1-1** (HealthLinkBC) to speak to a registered nurse any time - day or night.
- **Call 9-1-1** if you have any:
 - trouble breathing or shortness of breath
 - chest pain
 - sudden severe pain

Questions you might have:
