

# Thyroid Surgery: *Home instructions*

## What is thyroid surgery?

Thyroid [thahy-roid] surgery is an operation to take out part or all of your **thyroid gland**. Your thyroid gland makes hormones that control how your body uses energy (metabolism). Your doctor may recommend thyroid surgery if you have:

- Growths on your thyroid
- Cancer
- Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid)

## How do I care for myself at home?

### Medicine

- **Take your pain medicines exactly as ordered by your doctor.** They will help reduce your pain but will not keep you from feeling pain completely. Pain medicines can cause constipation. You may need to take a stool softener or mild laxative.
- **You may need to take medicine to replace the hormones that your thyroid used to make.** If your entire thyroid was removed, you will need to take thyroid hormone pills for the rest of your life. If only part of your thyroid is taken out, the remaining portion may produce enough hormone that you won't need to take medicine to replace it.
- **You may need to take vitamin supplements.**

### Activity

- **Get plenty of rest.** You may walk, but don't push yourself too hard. Slowly increase your pace and distance as you are able to tolerate.
- **Do not do any heavy lifting or strenuous activity after surgery until your doctor says it's okay.**
- **Do not drive while taking pain medicines.** Ask someone to drive you to appointments if needed.



### *When should I call my doctor?*

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

- Swelling at the incision site
- Bleeding at the incision site
- Warmth, redness, or tenderness at the incision site that gets worse
- Fever above 101.5°F (38.5°C)
- A sore throat that continues beyond 3 weeks
- Tingling or cramps in the hands, feet, or lips
- Difficulty breathing
- Excessive hoarseness

### Wound care

- **Care for your incision as directed by your doctor.** The incision may be closed with stitches and surgical tape or glue. You may have a light bandage. You can take it off when your doctor says it is okay.
  - You may shower the next morning and get the incision wet. Do not soak in a bath, go swimming, or use a hot tub until your doctor tells you it is okay.
  - The incision will be slightly raised, and there may be a little swelling and bruising. These signs should be gone in about 6 weeks.
  - Apply ice packs to the incision site to help reduce swelling and pain. Put a cloth between the incision and the ice pack. Do not put ice directly on the skin.
  - Put pillows under your head, neck, and upper body to help reduce swelling and pain.

