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N O R T H E R N  
E N D O C R I N E A N D  
B R E A S T S U R G E R Y  
C E N T R E

**Dr. Mark Sywak FRACS**

POST-OPERATIVE  
INSTRUCTIONS  
OPEN  
PARATHYROIDECTOMY

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# Open Parathyroidectomy

**Wound Care:** Your wound will be covered with tape, which should be left in place for about 2 weeks. The tape will be removed at your first postoperative visit. You may notice some dried blood under the tape but that is of no concern. You can wash and shower with the tape in place and even get it wet. Once removed or fallen off, the tape needs to be replaced and you need to change it every 2 or 3 days for the next 2 to 3 months in order to get the best possible cosmetic result. The preferred tape is narrow, flesh coloured Micropore which can be obtained from your chemist.

**Activities:** You should generally restrict vigorous activities for 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. Activities which involve turning the head suddenly, such as driving in heavy traffic, should be avoided for 5-7 days post surgery, although local driving is acceptable. Commonsense is the best way to avoid straining your neck.

**Local symptoms:** A variety of local symptoms are common for several weeks after surgery including tightness and swelling of the local area around the wound. Numbness of the skin above the wound may be present and may last for many months.

**Late Complications:** The only delayed complication of concern is wound infection. This may have occurred if the wound becomes very red, hot and more swollen. If that occurs you must seek attention from your local doctor straight away who will arrange for you to have antibiotics.

**Follow-up:** Generally your follow-up will be:

- 1 A visit at 2 to 4 weeks after surgery to have the tape removed and pathology discussed. You will need to ring the office to make an appointment for that visit.
- 2 A second follow-up consult at 3 months.

In addition, if you have been placed on calcium supplements, you need to be seen by your local doctor on a weekly basis to have a blood test to check your calcium level, and to have your calcium supplements progressively reduced (see "Calcium Supplements" below). You will also need to be reviewed by your endocrinologist 4 to 8 weeks after surgery to monitor your progress. Your local doctor or endocrinologist may need to see you more frequently for specific review if there are any problems.

**Country Patients:** If you are unable to return to Sydney for follow-up, it may be possible for the tape to be changed and for your follow-up to be undertaken by your local doctor. We would need to confirm these arrangements before you leave the hospital.

**Calcium Supplements:** The calcium level falls to normal very quickly after successful parathyroid surgery. Sometimes this fall is associated with symptoms such as tingling around the mouth and in the hands and, very occasionally, cramping ("tetany") of the hands and feet. A temporary drop in calcium levels below normal also sometimes occurs. The calcium level is checked in hospital and if it is normal, you will generally not need calcium supplements. If the calcium level is low, you will be sent home on calcium supplements. You will then need to see your local doctor every week after discharge to have a blood test and to have the calcium levels checked. If, at each visit, the calcium level in the blood is normal, then the dose needs to be reduced according to the protocol below. Please give this protocol to your local doctor.

**If you have any problems, following your thyroid surgery, please contact Dr. Sywak or your local doctor.**

**IF YOU HAVE BEEN DISCHARGED ON CALCIUM AND/OR ROCALTROL MEDICATION, PLEASE DETACH THIS PAGE AND GIVE IT TO YOUR DOCTOR ONE WEEK AFTER DISCHARGE**

Dear Doctor:

Your patient has been discharged on calcium supplements following their thyroid surgery. They have been asked to see you on a weekly basis to have their serum calcium level checked and their medication reduced according to the protocol:

**If your patient is just on Caltrate tablets:**

On discharge they will normally be on:

*2 Caltrate twice a day*

If calcium is normal at one week reduce to:

*1 Caltrate twice a day*

If calcium is normal the next week reduce to:

*1 Caltrate daily*

If calcium is normal the next week:

*Cease Caltrate*

**If your patient is on Caltrate + Rocaltrol:**

On discharge they will normally be on:

*2 Caltrate twice a day + 2 Rocaltrol twice a day*

If calcium is normal at one week reduce to:

*1 Caltrate twice a day + 1 Rocaltrol twice a day*

If calcium is normal the next week reduce to:

*1 Caltrate daily + 1 Rocaltrol daily*

If calcium is normal the next week reduce to:

*1 Caltrate daily*

If calcium is normal the next week:

*Cease Caltrate*

**DOCTOR, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS PLEASE CONTACT MARK SYWAK AS LISTED ON THE OVER LEAF**

**Dr. Mark Sywak FRACS**