

Shalamar Hospital is striving to provide our patients quality health care, at lowest possible costs. Our hospital is continually active in pioneering new treatments and therapies to improve the lives of people in our community.



### 11. Less common problems

(1 in 1000 patients) include development of a chest infection (particularly in those who already have chest complaints), muscle pains, damage to teeth, lips or tongue, or the worsening of an existing medical condition. Very uncommon problems (1 in 10,000 patients) include damage to the eyes, a serious drug allergy, and nerve damage. The risk of awareness (remaining conscious) whilst under a general anesthetic is very uncommon (also 1:10,000). When awareness does occur, it is typically for a short period prior to the operation commencing. It is extremely rare to be conscious during the operation.

The risk to you as an individual will depend on whether you have any other illness, personal factors (such as smoking or being overweight), and the type of surgery you are having. Your anesthetist will discuss these risks with you before the operation.



## PARATHYROID SURGERY RISKS

**ENDOCRINE SURGERY CLINIC**  
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Parathyroid surgery is generally considered safe, and the majority of patients undergo the procedure without complications. However, as with any surgical procedure, there are inherent risks involved.

### **1. Voice Changes**

Changes in the voice can occur after parathyroid surgery and can be attributed to three potential reasons. The first cause is damage to one or both recurrent laryngeal nerves, which are situated behind the thyroid gland and control the movement of the vocal cords in the larynx. If the nerve is bruised, it may not function properly immediately after surgery, but will typically recover and return to normal within a few weeks. However, in some cases, it may take several months for the voice to return to its normal state. Permanent damage to one nerve occurs in approximately 1 out of 100 patients and can result in a hoarse, croaky, and weak voice. While the body may adapt to the damage, voice therapy or additional specialist surgery may be required to improve the voice. Permanent damage to both nerves is rare but can result in a severe problem requiring a permanent tracheostomy (breathing tube) to be inserted into the neck.

The second reason for voice changes is non-specific and may occur after any neck surgery, even if there is no injury to the nerves controlling vocal cord movement. While this type of voice change is generally not noticeable, it may cause the voice to be slightly deeper and lead to voice fatigue, particularly in those who rely on their voice for professional reasons. Fortunately, this type of change is temporary and typically resolves within a few months after the operation.

### **2. Low Calcium Levels**

In some cases, after parathyroid surgery, calcium levels may drop too low. This is usually temporary and occurs while the body regains balance of calcium levels. Your surgical team will check for this postoperatively. If you feel tingling or spasms in your lips, fingers, or toes after the operation, this could be an indication that your calcium levels may be low, and you will need to seek attention from your doctor or your surgical team. You may be prescribed calcium tablets temporarily.

### **3. Calcium Levels Remaining High Despite Surgery**

Occasionally, in around 3 to 5 operations out of every 100, the blood calcium levels remain high despite patients undergoing surgery. This indicates that the operation has not been successful in curing the condition. Your surgeon will now explain what happens next. This may involve repeating the tests and scans you

have already had to see if further information may be gained. Occasionally, more involved tests are required, and if this is the case, your surgical team will explain these to you.

### **4. Bleeding after the Operation**

This is an uncommon complication that can lead to neck discomfort or, in more severe cases, breathing difficulties. Occasionally, patients will need to return to the operating theatre and have further surgery to have the neck explored so that the cause of bleeding can be dealt with.

### **5. Neck Numbness**

Some patients may experience numbness around the surgery scar after their operation. This usually settles in the fullness of time.

### **6. Swallowing Difficulties**

Following a neck exploration, you should be able to eat and drink normally, but some patients feel as though there is a lump in their throat as they swallow. This is common and will disappear in time.

### **7. Scar**

Sometimes the scar may be red for a few months after the operation before fading to a thin white line. It takes about six months to one year for the scar to reach its final appearance. Some patients may develop a thick exaggerated scar, which is unsightly, but this is very rare.

### **8. Wound Infection**

Infection is not common, but if it happens, it can be treated with antibiotics.

### **9. Wound Swelling**

Some degree of swelling around the wound is normal following any type of surgery, including parathyroid operations.

### **10. Risks of General Anesthesia**

Modern anesthesia is very safe, and serious problems are uncommon. It is not uncommon after an anesthetic for some patients to feel sick, and for some to vomit. Certain people are more prone to this problem, and your anesthetist will give you medication that decreases the chance of this happening. Other problems that can occur include sore throat, dizziness, blurred vision, headache, itching, aches, pains, and backache. These problems tend to get better within a few hours of waking up.