

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.



Patient Information About Parathyroid Operations

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The parathyroid glands are four small glands located between the thyroid gland and the windpipe, with two on each side. They produce the parathyroid hormone (PTH) which is responsible for regulating calcium in the body. Each gland is usually 3-4 mm in size in healthy adults. When an abnormal parathyroid gland is over-functioning, it may produce too much PTH, causing high calcium in the body. This condition is known as primary hyperparathyroidism and often involves a single abnormal gland, although multiple glands may be affected in some cases. PTH affects the kidneys, bones, and gastrointestinal tract to increase calcium in the blood. Some patients may have high calcium detected on routine blood tests without experiencing any symptoms. However, high calcium levels may cause symptoms such as muscle weakness, fatigue, changes in heart rate, weight loss, excessive thirst, changes in urinary frequency, dehydration, stomach ulcers, kidney stones, and fractures. Parathyroid surgery is recommended even in patients without symptoms caused by high calcium.

WHAT ARE THE NON-SURGICAL ALTERNATIVES FOR TREATING OVERACTIVE PARATHYROID GLANDS?

While medication can be used to manage high calcium levels in the blood, it is usually only a temporary solution and does not address the underlying problem. Your endocrinologist may have already discussed these options with you prior to referring you to a surgical clinic.

WHAT TESTS CAN I EXPECT TO HAVE BEFORE SURGERY?

Before being referred to a surgical clinic, your endocrinologist will likely have already performed blood and urine tests. In addition, all patients will need to undergo an ultrasound scan of the neck and kidneys. In most cases, a specialized scan called a Sestamibi scan will also be required. A CT scan or MRI scan may be needed for a minority of patients.

WHAT TYPE OF PARATHYROID OPERATIONS SHOULD I EXPECT?

It is common to experience fatigue after undergoing parathyroid surgery. The exhaustion you may have felt prior to the operation may take a few weeks to resolve. In some cases, post-surgery, the calcium levels in your bloodstream may decrease, which is when the body restores control of calcium balance. Your medical team will monitor this through postoperative blood tests and prescribe calcium tablets if necessary. If you experience tingling or spasms in your lips, fingers, or toes, it may indicate low blood calcium levels, so you should

contact your doctor.

Following a neck exploration, you should be able to eat and drink normally, but you may feel like there's a lump in your throat when you swallow. This is a common side effect that will disappear with time.

Before resuming driving, it is important to ensure that you can make an emergency stop without injuring your neck. You should also be able to comfortably turn your neck to look around while driving, such as when changing lanes. Additionally, you should inform your car insurance company about your parathyroid surgery as each insurer may have its own rules regarding how long you should wait before returning to driving.

The duration for returning to work depends on the type of work you do and the type of operation you have had. If you have office-based work, you may be able to return after two to three weeks, while heavier work may require four weeks or longer. Your surgical team will provide guidance on when it is safe to resume working.

WHAT SHOULD I DO PRIOR TO SURGERY?

If you are taking regular medication, you should continue to take it unless advised otherwise. Your surgeon may ask you to stop taking certain medications, such as Aspirin, Dipyridamole (Persantine), or Clopidogrel (Plavix), in the days leading up to your operation. If you are taking blood-thinning medication, such as warfarin, Rivaroxaban, or Dabigatran, be sure to inform your surgeon.

HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL?

The length of your hospital stay will depend on the type of operation you have and your individual circumstances. Your surgeon will be able to provide you with more information about this.

WHAT ARE SOME POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS THAT MAY ARISE FROM PARATHYROID SURGERY?

While complications from parathyroid surgery are rare, most patients experience uncomplicated surgeries and are discharged the day after. Your surgeon will go over the benefits and possible complications of the procedure with you. The common complications include bleeding, injury to nerve and reduced calcium levels in postoperative setting. This should be complimented through replacement of calcium.