

Your thyroid operation



ENT Department

patient**information**

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Slovak

Ak vy alebo niekto koho poznáte potrebuje pomoc pri pochopení alebo čítaní tohto dokumentu, prosím kontaktujte nás na vyššie uvedenom čísle alebo nám pošlite e-mail.

Slovensky

Kurdish Sorani

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Arabic

عربي
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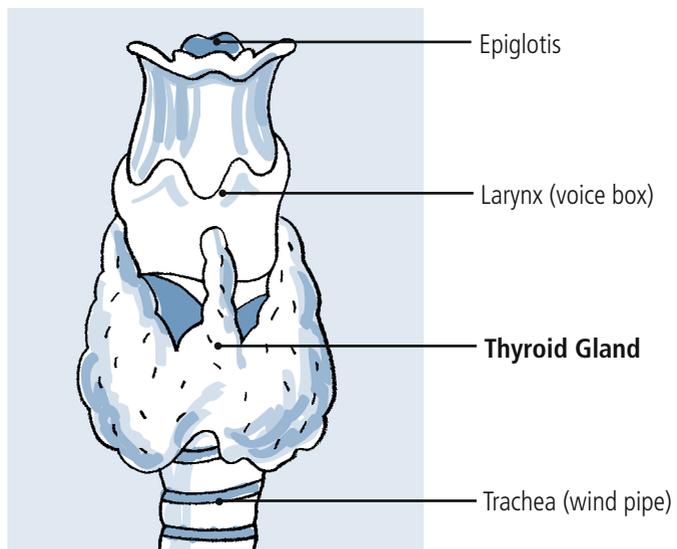
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Your thyroid operation

This leaflet is about your stay in hospital under the care of Mr S Richards and his team. It also gives you an idea about what it will be like afterwards. If you want to know more, please ask.

What is a thyroid operation?

The thyroid gland lies just in front of the windpipe in the neck. It makes the hormone thyroxine, and passes into the blood stream to keep the body active. If the gland makes too much thyroxine, the body gets overactive and the heart can be strained. If the gland enlarges, it may cause a swelling in the front of your neck. Sometimes the swelling is caused by a tumour. It can also press on the windpipe and cause difficulty with breathing.



Your thyroid operation

What does the operation consist of?

Thyroidectomy involves an operation to remove some or occasionally all the thyroid gland. Great care is taken to avoid the nerves that control your voice, which are very close to the gland. The scar is about 3 inches long and is on the front of your neck. It heals with a barely visible scar.

Are there any alternatives?

If you have an overactive gland, drug treatment may have been tried and has failed, or has caused bad side-effects. If so, the only alternative to surgery is radiation treatment with iodine. This treatment will probably have been discussed with you. It is not suitable for everyone and does have side-effects.

If you have an enlarged thyroid causing pressure effects, these are likely to get worse, and the swelling may become more unsightly. If you have a lump in the thyroid, which may be a tumour, an operation is necessary to find out the exact nature of the lump.

Your thyroid operation

What happens before the operation?

Once on the waiting list for thyroid surgery you will be seen by the pre-assessment nurses for a general health check to ensure you are fit for surgery and to ensure all tests are available on the day of surgery. You may have various tests organised such as a chest x-ray, an ECG (tracing of the heart) and blood tests. If you are not clear about the operation the pre-assessment nurses will be able to answer your questions.

What happens on the day of operation?

Your surgery will take place in Doncaster Royal Infirmary. You will be admitted to the Theatre Admissions Unit on the morning of your surgery. You will be seen by a member of the nursing staff, the anaesthetist and the surgeon. You will be asked to sign a consent form for the operation and be made comfortable ready for surgery.

Visit by the anaesthetic team

The anaesthetist giving your anaesthetic will talk to you and examine you. They will need to know about any chest troubles, dental treatment and previous anaesthetics you have had, plus any anaesthetic problems in your family.



What happens after the operation?

Will it hurt?

The wound is uncomfortable and you will have discomfort in your neck. Swallowing may be uncomfortable. You will be given injections or pills for the pain. Ask for more if the pain is unpleasant. A drain will have been inserted in the wound at the end of the operation to drain any blood away. This will generally be removed the day after surgery. If the whole gland is removed then blood tests are taken for two days to check the calcium level in the blood. If this level drops it can cause tingling and will be replaced through a drip and tablets.

The wound and stitches

The wound is closed with an absorbable stitch under the skin so there is no need for removal. There may be some purple bruising around the wound, which fades to a yellow colour after 2 to 3 days. It is not important. There may be some swelling of the surrounding skin, which also improves in 2 to 3 days.

Your thyroid operation

How long will I be in hospital?

If the operation was to remove half of the thyroid gland (hemithyroidectomy) you will be in hospital for 1 to 2 days, if the whole gland (total thyroidectomy) or second half (completion thyroidectomy) of the gland is removed you will be in hospital for 2 to 4 days.

Will I need to come back to the hospital?

You will be given or sent an appointment for an out-patient follow-up, usually within a month of surgery.

Work

You should be able to return to a light job after about 2 weeks and heavy job within 4 weeks. You can drive as soon as you can make an emergency stop without hurting your neck, ie. After about 2 weeks.

Complications

While there are risks with any kind of operation, most patients who have thyroidectomy have few or no complications. However, you should remember that thyroidectomy is a major operation, and complications can occur, though these are rare. These include bleeding requiring a return to theatre (1%), and unintended injury to the nerves that control your voice, leaving it weak or croaky (temporary damage 5%, permanent damage 2%).

If the whole thyroid gland has been removed, sometimes the calcium level in your blood falls below normal in the hours and days after the operation (30%). This can give you a tingling feeling in your fingers or your lips. Long term only 7% of patients require calcium tablets.

Other problems include chest infections (5% - particularly in smokers), wound infection (<5%), or blood clots in the legs or lungs (<5%).

Most patients cope well with the operation, but some patients are surprised that they recover more slowly than expected. You should be back to normal within a month.

If you wish to know more, please ask.

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How to contact us

Day Surgery

Telephone 01709 424566

Theatre Admission Unit

Telephone 01709 427482

Rotherham Hospital Switchboard

Telephone 01709 820000

Doncaster Royal Infirmary

Telephone 01302 366666

Useful contact numbers

NHS Direct

Telephone 0845 4647

Health Info

Telephone 01709 427190

Stop Smoking Service

Telephone 01709 422444

Patient Services

Telephone 01709 424461

A&E

Telephone 01709 424455

For GP out of hours, contact your surgery

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk

www.direct.gov.uk

www.therotherhamft.nhs.uk

www.dbh.nhs.uk

British Association of
Otorhinolaryngologists
(Head and Neck Surgeons)

www.ent.uk.org

British Thyroid Association
www.british-thyroid-association.org

British Association of Endocrine
and Thyroid Surgeons
www.baets.info

British Thyroid Foundation
www.btf-thyroid.org/

We value your comments

If you have any comments or concerns about the care we have provided please let us know, or alternatively you can write to:

Patient Services

The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust

Rotherham Hospital
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Email complaints@rothgen.nhs.uk

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