



Carolina Ear, Nose & Throat Head and Neck Surgery Center

Your Parathyroid Glands

Most people have 4 parathyroid glands that rest adjacent to the thyroid gland or (rarely) in the gland itself. These are the size of a pea. Parathyroid glands help maintain a normal level of calcium in your body. Occasionally, one or more of the glands may secrete an excessive amount of Parathyroid Hormone (PTH). This excessive PTH can cause: • Osteoporosis • Kidney stones • General malaise, fatigue and mental foggiess • Pancreatitis • Peptic (stomach) ulcers or reflux • Frequent urination.

How Does Your Doctor Make the Diagnosis?

The diagnosis of a parathyroid abnormality is made by taking a medical history, performing a physical exam and check blood and urine tests. Other tests that your doctor may order include:

1. An ultrasound of your neck
2. A Sestimibi Scan
3. A CT scan of your neck

How is Hyperparathyroidism Treated?

The treatment of excessive PTH due to a parathyroid tumor(s) is surgery. The majority of the time, only one gland needs to be removed. Other times, 3-4 glands may be removed to achieve a lowering of the PTH level. Nearly all patient needs to take a synthetic Vitamin D and calcium supplement after surgery.

The procedure is done under general anesthesia and takes about an hour.. The incision falls in a natural skin crease in your neck to help camouflage it as best as possible. The removal of a parathyroid gland starts with a skin incision in the lower neck, above the breastbone. The abnormal gland is searched for carefully. This may require dissection of and around the recurrent laryngeal nerve. These are the nerve that control movement of your vocal cords. Lymph nodes and thyroid nodules may resemble parathyroid glands, and thus slow the dissection. Both sides of the neck may need to be explored. In these cases it is not uncommon for the surgery to take longer than an hour. A few percent of cases have either 5 glands or a gland in an unusual location. These procedures are more challenging. A second operation is sometimes needed to find these glands. The goal is to reduce the preoperative PTH level to < 50% of the preoperative

value and into the normal range. Sometimes this blood level can be checked while you are asleep. The incision is sewn closed. Patients stay one night in the hospital to be sure that swallowing, breathing and talking are all ok

The final pathology report may not be available until one week after surgery.

Preparing for Parathyroidectomy

1. Noting to eat or drink after midnight the evening before the procedure. This includes all foods, liquids, water, candy, mints or gum. You may brush your teeth. Your procedure will be cancelled if you do not follow these instructions.
2. Please notify us of any medications and the dosage, including insulin or allergies you may have. If you take routine medications, please take them as directed with just a sip of water in the a.m..
3. Please avoid any aspirin, aspirin-containing products or ibuprofen (Advil®, Vitamin E, Aleve®, etc.) for 10 days prior to your surgery. If you are on any medications that affect bleeding (such as coumadin or warfarin) please notify the office immediately.
4. Please remove all make-up, nail polish and false nails before surgery. This will help your surgical team evaluate the blood oxygen during your procedure.
5. Do not bring valuables (cash, credit cards, watches, jewelry, etc.) to the Hospital.
6. Remove all make-up and nail polish before coming to the Hospital.