

Parathyroidectomy

What is Parathyroidectomy?

Parathyroidectomy is a procedure in which one or all of your parathyroid glands are removed. The operation is carried out through the neck and in a skin crease.

When is it used?

The parathyroid glands help control the level of calcium in the blood. An overactive parathyroid gland increases the level of calcium in the blood. As a result, your bones may become weak. In addition, you may develop kidney stones, weakness in your muscles, decreased alertness, or stomach pain.

Parathyroidectomy is done when one or all of the glands are overactive.

An alternative is to choose not to have treatment, recognizing the risks of your condition.

How long will I be in hospital?

The length of time that you need to stay in hospital depends upon your level of physical fitness and the type of operation being undertaken. If it is minimally invasive parathyroidectomy, that is we are taking out one abnormal parathyroid gland only which has been demonstrated on the scans, this may be undertaken as a day case (you go home the same day) or an overnight stay may be required. If conventional parathyroidectomy has been recommended, it is usual to stay the night of the operation.

Most patients go home the following day but for those patients where the calcium level in the blood drops and symptoms develop, we sometimes need to keep patients in a little longer.

Sometimes, a little swelling occurs in the neck after the operation and it may be a little sore due to the surgery but this is not usually particularly troublesome.

What are the risks associated with this procedure?

- There are some risks when you have general anaesthesia. Discuss these risks with your doctor.
- The wound usually heals up to a fine line but sometimes it can heal up with a thickened scar called a keloid scar.

- The laryngeal nerves may be injured. These nerves allow you to speak normally. If they are damaged your voice may be hoarse. This is usually temporary but sometimes it can be permanent.
- After the operation the blood calcium levels sometimes drop and you may need calcium or Vitamin D supplements.
- There is a possibility that more than one parathyroid gland is overactive. There is also a small risk that the abnormal parathyroid gland lies outside the neck and so it is possible that the operation may not be successful and a second operation is required.
- Occasionally, after the operation a plastic drain is inserted into the neck for the first few days but this tends to be the exception rather than the rule.
- Some patients complain that swallowing is not quite right for a few days after the operation.

More information is available on the Trust website www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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