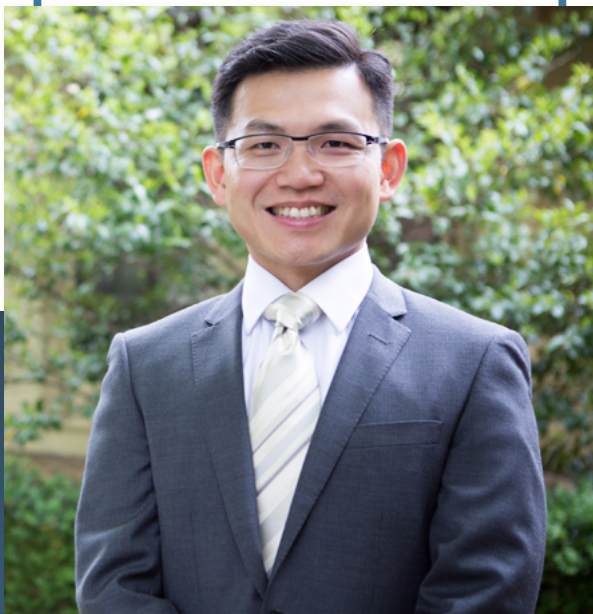




A/Prof. James Lee

SPECIALIST GENERAL AND ENDOCRINE SURGEON



# Total Thyroidectomy

CALCIUM MANAGEMENT PROTOCOL

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University

# General Information

## Symptoms after thyroid surgery:

It is common to experience one or more of the following symptoms following thyroid surgery. These symptoms are usually mild to moderate, improving over weeks to months. So if you experience prolonged symptoms, please discuss with Mr Lee or your GP.

- ➔ Pain or funny sensations around the wound and / or neck muscles - usually settles in 1 to 2 weeks
- ➔ Slight tightness and choking sensation in the throat
- ➔ Numbness and / or swelling around the wound
- ➔ Weakness of the voice
- ➔ Some difficulty with swallowing
- ➔ Headaches and tiredness

If you experience difficulty breathing, rapid swelling in the neck or muscle spasms, please go to the nearest emergency department immediately, or call the ambulance.

## Wound Care

When you are discharged from hospital, you will have some sticky tape dressing over your wound. Please leave it in place until you return for your first review appointment in 1 - 2 weeks' time. You can shower with the tape in place, just gently dab dry. Please do not be alarmed if it becomes a little blood stained. It is common for the skin around the wound to become swollen over the week after surgery. However, if it becomes red, hot and painful, it may have become infected. This is very uncommon. If it occurs, please see your GP or Mr Lee to see if you need antibiotics.

The tape on your wound will be replaced at your first follow-up appointment with Mr Lee. The wound should continue to be taped for a total of 3 weeks from the day of surgery to promote optimal healing. The 1/2 inch skin tone Micropore tape can be obtained at your local chemist. After 3 weeks, daily massage of the wound with Vitamine E cream or similar products can help reduce the swelling as well as improving the appearance of the scar.

# Activities

Vigorous activities should be avoided for at least 3 weeks after surgery. Driving should also be avoided until you can comfortably and swiftly turn your head without pain, usually 2 weeks. Ease yourself back into various activities when the neck pain and stiffness have settled.

## Medications

- ➔ **For pain:** If you need stronger pain medications than those you can get without a prescription, you will be discharged with them. They can be weaned off as soon as possible.
- ➔ **Thyroid hormone replacement:** You will need to take thyroxine (e.g. Oroxine / Eutroxig) for life. Thyroxine is best taken half an hour before breakfast on an empty stomach. After the first 4 - 6 weeks, you will need to have a blood test to check your thyroid hormone levels. This can be arranged by your GP or endocrinologist, who will also adjust the thyroxine dose if necessary.
- ➔ **Calcium supplementation:** This is usually weaned over the first few weeks after surgery. You will need to see your GP to have your blood calcium level checked and the dose adjusted on a weekly basis. Calcium tablets should be taken with meals.
- ➔ **Other medications:** You may also need to take other medications as necessary, such as laxatives if you experience constipation with the pain medications, or Vitamine D supplements if your calcium level is very low. Mr Lee or your GP will discuss these with you.

## Country Patients

If you are unable to return to Melbourne for follow-up, you will need to arrange all follow-up with your GP. Please discuss this with Mr Lee prior to discharge.

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**NB Please note that the information in this pamphlet is provided for the purpose of general reference & education. Mr Lee cannot be held liable for any deviations from the information contained within this pamphlet. Always discuss your specific circumstances with your surgeon Mr Lee.**

# Questions

It is always a good idea to write down any questions before you forget:

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## Follow-up Appointments

- ➔ **With your GP:** It is essential that you see your GP weekly after the surgery to have blood tests to check the calcium level in order to wean the calcium supplementation. This process will take at least 3 weeks. Your GP can also help answer any questions or concerns you might have regarding the surgery. If you do not see an endocrinologist, your GP will also check your thyroid function about 6 weeks after surgery.
- ➔ **With Mr Lee:** Your first appointment to see Mr Lee will be made approximately 2 weeks after surgery. Please ring the rooms on (03) 9246 6466 to confirm your appointment. Any subsequent appointments will be made after your first follow-up visit.
- ➔ **With your endocrinologist:** You should also return to see your endocrinologist approximately 4 - 6 weeks after surgery to have your thyroxine level checked and adjusted. You may also need to discuss other treatments at the time.

## Your next appointment with Mr James Lee:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Epworth Richmond:** Suite 8.2, 89 Bridge Road, Richmond

**Knox Private Hospital:** 262 Mountain Highway, Wantirna