

# Total Thyroidectomy (for Thyrotoxicosis)

GS19 Lite - Expires end of January 2026



This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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## What is the thyroid gland?

The thyroid gland is a structure in your neck that produces a hormone called thyroxine, which regulates your body's metabolism.

Your thyroid gland has become overactive and is producing too many hormones. This is called thyrotoxicosis and can lead to some distressing symptoms such as losing weight, tremors, sweatiness, being unable to cope with heat, difficulty sleeping and eye problems.

## What are the benefits of surgery?

Your body will stop producing thyroid hormones so you should no longer have any distressing symptoms.

## Are there any alternatives to a total thyroidectomy?

Medication, such as carbimazole or propylthiouracil, can be used to control thyroid activity and are often used to begin with.

Radioactive iodine can also be used for some people.

It is possible to remove only part of the gland so that you continue to produce some thyroid hormones and do not need to start taking thyroxine tablets. However, your thyroid gland may become overactive or underactive in the future, and you may need further treatment.

## What does the operation involve?

The operation is performed under a general anaesthetic and usually takes 90 minutes to 2 hours.

Your surgeon will make a cut on your neck in the line of one of your skin creases.

Your surgeon will remove the thyroid gland.

## How can I prepare myself for the operation?

If you smoke, stopping smoking now may reduce your risk of developing complications and will improve your long-term health.

Try to maintain a healthy weight. You have a higher risk of developing complications if you are

overweight. Regular exercise should help to prepare you for the operation, help you to recover and improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Speak to the healthcare team about any vaccinations you might need to reduce your risk of serious illness while you recover. When you come into hospital, practise hand washing and wear a face covering when asked.

## What complications can happen?

Some complications can be serious and in rare cases can even cause death.

### General complications of any operation

- Infection of the surgical site (wound)
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials or medication
- Blood clot in your leg
- Blood clot in your lung
- Chest infection

### Specific complications of this operation

- Bleeding
- Change in your voice
- Breathing difficulties
- Aspiration problems
- Thyroid hormone levels in your blood will drop
- Thyroid hormone levels in your blood may increase
- Drop in calcium levels in your blood

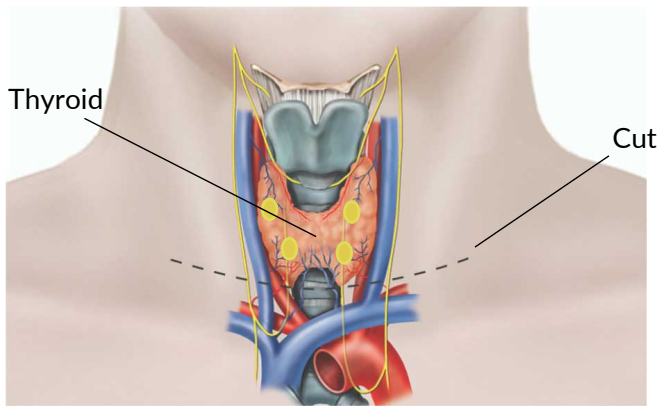
### Consequences of this procedure

- Pain
- Unsightly scarring of your skin

## How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home after 1 to 2 days.

You should be able to return to work and normal activities after about 2 weeks, depending on how much surgery you need and your type of work.



A thyroidectomy

Regular exercise should help you to return to normal activities as soon as possible. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

Most people make a full recovery and can return to normal activities.

The healthcare team will usually arrange for you to come back to the clinic within 4 weeks. Your surgeon will tell you the results and discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

## Summary

Thyrotoxicosis is a condition caused by an overactive thyroid gland. A thyroidectomy to remove the gland is one of a number of ways thyrotoxicosis can be treated.

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

## Acknowledgements

### Reviewer

Roger Berry (MBBS, FRACS)

### Illustrator

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