Parotid Gland Surgery

What is the Parotid Gland?

The parotid gland is a wedge shaped gland that makes saliva (spit) and is located in front of each ear. Saliva helps break down the food you eat. The facial nerve, is the nerve that makes your face move. It goes through your parotid gland and divides it into 2 lobes: a superficial lobe (closest to your skin) and a deep lobe.
Small tumors can grow in your parotid gland. These tumors may or may not be cancer. Common symptoms of a tumor in your parotid gland include:

- A small lump that can be felt on your skin near your gland
- Swollen lymph nodes in your neck
- Weak face muscles

Your doctor has recommended that you have a parotidectomy to remove some or all of your parotid gland.

**What to Expect After Your Parotid Gland Surgery**

After your surgery you will be taken to your hospital room to recover. You may have a small drain tube in place near your incision to help drain fluid from the area. Your doctor will remove the drain tube when the drainage amount is normal. This may happen before you leave the hospital.

You may have **facial nerve weakness** after surgery. This weakness is usually short-term, but may not go away. This type of side effect is based on where your tumor was located. Weakness is most common when your surgery includes both lobes of the parotid gland. This weakness will make your face droop on the side where the gland was removed. It may be hard to chew, smile and move that side of your face. You may also find it difficult to close your eye(s) all the way, which can cause dry eyes. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about facial nerve weakness.

**Frey Syndrome** is a common long-term side effect after this surgery. This can cause sweating or flushing of your face when you eat. This syndrome may take up to 6 months to develop. Talk to your doctor if you have any questions about Frey Syndrome.

If your doctor removes the deep lobe of your parotid gland you may develop **first bite syndrome**. This can cause pain with the first bite of food. This usually goes away with time and the pain can be reduced by eating bland food at the beginning of each meal.
When should I call the doctor?

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following:

- Chills or fever of 101 degrees Fahrenheit (38.3 degrees Celsius) or higher
- Signs of infection at the incision site (redness, warmth, or swelling)
- Drainage from your incision site that smells bad
- An increased amount of drainage from your incision site
- Pain that gets worse and is not relieved by pain medicine