THYROID SURGERY

General information:
At times, it is necessary to remove a portion or the entire thyroid gland. Thyroid surgery is recommended for thyroid glands that are not well controlled with medication, thyroid enlargement causing compressive symptoms, or nodules that are suspicious for cancer based upon growth or needle biopsy.

Procedure considerations:
Thyroid surgery can either be “same day surgery” or may involve spending a night in the hospital to monitor blood levels of calcium. A general anesthetic is used for all thyroid surgery meaning you will be asleep for the entire procedure. A small midline neck incision is used for surgery that is typically about 1½ inches in length. After surgery a surgical drain may need to be removed 1-2 days post surgery.

Risks of surgery:
All surgeries have risks and only the most important are listed here.
1. Bleeding: there is a risk of bleeding with any surgery. Occasionally a collection of blood known as a hematoma may develop under the surgical site. At times, this may need to be drained.
2. Infection: with any surgery there is a risk of infection. Signs of infection include fever, discolored drainage from the wound site, or redness and irritation around the wound site. Antibiotics are given at the time of surgery to help prevent this complication.
3. Hoarseness: loss of voice or weakness of the voice is a specific complication related to thyroid surgery. The nerve to the vocal cord runs on the undersurface of the thyroid and may be stretched or damaged as a result of removing the gland. The entire surgery is designed to help prevent this complication and a variety of monitoring tools may be employed to lessen this risk. Typically hoarseness lasts anywhere from 6 weeks to 6 months, but permanent hoarseness has been reported.
4. Calcium level imbalances: the control of calcium in your body is regulated by glands known as “parathyroid” glands. These gland are located on the sides of your thyroid gland and at times within the thyroid gland. These glands share a blood supply to the thyroid. At times, after removal of the entire thyroid gland, calcium levels may drop. This may be temporary or permanent. Calcium replacement may be necessary to help control your calcium levels.

Post surgery instructions:
Keep dressing on wound until follow up appointment. Keep dressing dry. Take pain medication as needed/directed. Avoid aspirin containing products or blood thinners for two weeks post surgery unless otherwise directed. Avoid heavy lifting (>25lbs) or strenuous exercise for two weeks post surgery. Take all medications as directed. A follow up appointment will be scheduled for one week post surgery for wound inspection.

As always, call with any questions: 815-758-8106