

What is a thyroglossal duct cyst?

The thyroglossal duct is a tube in the neck that helps the thyroid gland develop in a baby before it's born. Usually, the duct closes after the thyroid gland forms. If it doesn't close, it leaves a space that can fill with liquid or mucus (called a cyst).

Thyroglossal duct cysts can develop at any age. Usually they are found in children. One symptom is a soft swelling or mass that appears on the front of the neck. If the cyst becomes infected, it may be tender and red.

How is a thyroglossal duct cyst treated?

If a thyroglossal duct cyst becomes infected, your doctor will give you antibiotics. Sometimes, doctors will do a surgery to take out the cyst and close the thyroglossal duct.

Possible side effects of surgery

Pain. After any surgery, some pain is normal. While you are in the hospital, your care team will do their best to help control your pain. They will ask you often about how much pain you are feeling. This helps your care team decide what pain medicines will work best for you. They may put pain medicine directly into your veins through an IV or give you pills.

When you go home, you will get a prescription for the same pain pills you took in the hospital. Follow the directions for your medicines. Tell your care team if your pain does not get better or if it gets worse.

Infection. Any time you have a cut in your skin, there is a risk of infection. Good hand washing is the best and easiest way to prevent infection. Wash or disinfect your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, before eating, and before touching the area of your surgery. Make sure your caregivers and visitors do, too.

Watch for these signs that show an infection may be starting:

- More pain, redness, or warmth at your surgery area
- More blood or fluid coming from your surgery area
- A fever higher than 100.3° F

If you notice any of these signs, call your care team right away.

Swelling. Swelling around the surgery area can cause pressure on your throat. This can make it hard to breathe. The surgeon will put tubes to drain fluids from the surgery area to help prevent swelling. While you are in the hospital, nurses will connect a suction device to the tubes to help remove the fluid. Your nurses will check the fluid often to make sure there is no sign of an infection.

Swelling can also make it hard to swallow. The swelling should get better a few days after surgery. Tell your care team or speech and swallowing therapist if you cannot drink liquids or if you have questions about what you should eat and drink.

Bleeding. The neck has many blood vessels so bleeding always presents a risk during neck surgery. The surgeon will place tubes in your neck to allow fluids that collect to drain away and to reduce the swelling after surgery. Your nurses will watch the amount and color of the drainage for excess bleeding. Some blood is common immediately after surgery, but the drainage becomes more yellow as you heal.

Blood clots. Inactivity increases the risk that a blood clot will form in your legs. If a clot occurs, it can move through the veins to your lungs. This can be deadly. To help prevent blood clots, your nurses will encourage you to get up and move around as much as you can. While you are in the hospital, your health care providers may put foam boots on your legs. They inflate and deflate to keep the blood in your leg veins moving so it cannot clot. Your doctor may also prescribe a blood thinner to prevent blood clots from forming.

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Pneumonia. Lying in bed too much keeps your lungs from expanding fully. This can increase the risk of getting the lung infection called pneumonia after surgery. To help prevent this, your nurses will ask you to start walking as soon after your surgery as it is safe. The nurses will also give you a device called an incentive spirometer to exercise your lungs in the hospital and after you go home. To use it, you breathe out as deeply as you can and breathe in through the mouthpiece of the device. It measures how much air you breathe in. After you go home, use the device about every two hours to keep your lungs in good shape and prevent pneumonia.



Using an incentive spirometer