

Informed Consent

Parathyroidectomy (Removal of the Parathyroid Gland)

You have elected to have your pet undergo a surgical procedure called parathyroidectomy. Parathyroidectomy is recommended in cases of functional (produce hormones) parathyroid nodules. In most animals, there are 4 parathyroid glands, two on the left and two on the right, associated with the thyroid glands. There can be multiple nodules and in tricky cases, the nodules may exist outside of the area of the thyroid gland. The goal of surgery is to remove abnormal tissue. The procedure is usually straightforward, however, there are some inherent risks. If you have any questions, please let us know.

The prognosis after parathyroidectomy is usually good, but complications arise in about 30% of patients. Here are some potential risks:

Hypocalcemia (low blood calcium levels)- this occurs as a result of the negative feedback inhibition on the part of the abnormal gland producing too much hormone- it basically shuts the other glands off. It can take time for the other glands to respond and start making hormone (PTH) again, and in that lag period, hypocalcemia could result. Hypocalcemia can be significant, severe, and potentially life-threatening. Your veterinarian will monitor calcium levels after surgery, but you need to be aware of some of the signs to watch for: restlessness, excess panting, itchy face, muscle fascinations, and seizures are some of the signs.

Persistent hypercalcemia (high blood calcium)-this can occur if there is more PTH producing tissue in the body. Typically revision surgery is recommended to try to find the abnormal tissue/nodule. This can prove difficult and sometimes, special imaging is needed.

Incision infection- this is a risk with any surgery and usually treatable with antibiotic therapy

Seroma- a collection of fluid under the skin, is quite common and usually self-limiting

Hemorrhage (bleeding)- significant hemorrhage is rare

Nerve damage- this could be permanent or temporary and may include Horner's syndrome-a cosmetic change with the eye or laryngeal paralysis (a laryngeal dysfunction which could require additional surgery)

Requirement for life long calcium supplementation- if all the parathyroid glands need to be removed, calcium will need to be provided for life

Aspiration pneumonia- this is inadvertent inhalation of food/water/saliva that is meant to be swallowed and may occur either singularly or associated with laryngeal paralysis (which may be independent or secondary to nerve damage during dissection)