



## **Parotidectomy**

### **What is a Parotidectomy ?**

The parotid gland is a primarily serous salivary gland that is located high in the neck in the preauricular area extending towards the cheek. The extratemporal facial nerve and its branches pass through the parotid gland and supply motor innervation to the muscles of facial expression, as well as to the postauricular muscles, the posterior belly of the digastric muscle, and the stylohyoid muscles.

The motor branches to the face are divided into cervicofacial and temporofacial branches, with the former supplying the muscles of the mouth and neck and the latter supplying the muscles of the forehead and eye (there is some overlap in the nasal region). There is no anatomic feature that formally separates the parotid gland into superficial and deep lobes, but the plane of the facial nerve generally serves for demarcation of the superficial and deep portions of the gland.

Surgical landmarks to the facial nerve include the tympanomastoid suture line, the tragal pointer, and the posterior belly of the digastric muscle. The tympanomastoid suture line lies between the mastoid and tympanic segments of the temporal bone and is approximately 6-8 mm lateral to the stylomastoid foramen. The main trunk of the nerve can also be found midway between (10 mm posteroinferior to) the cartilaginous tragal pointer of the external auditory canal and the posterior belly of the digastric muscle. The nerve is usually located inferior and medial to the pointer.

A superficial (or lateral) parotidectomy involves removing all of the gland superficial to the facial nerve, whereas a partial superficial parotidectomy involves removing only the portion of the gland surrounding a tumor or mass. In a partial superficial parotidectomy, only some branches of the facial nerve are usually dissected, whereas in a formal superficial parotidectomy, the entire cervicofacial and temporofacial divisions are dissected.

**How long does the surgery take to perform?** A typical parotidectomy takes 2 hours. A total parotidectomy takes 3 hours.

**What is the recovery time like?** Typically patients are back to normal and feeling well after 4-5 days.

**Will I need to stay overnight in the hospital?** Most people are discharged the same day. Depending on the extent of dissection however, you may be required to stay overnight.

**Any dietary restrictions after the surgery?** None. You may eat and drink normally after your surgery.

**Can I speak after surgery?** You may use your voice immediately after the surgery.

**Will I be sent home with any medications?** You will be given pain medications and antibiotics.

**What types of activities can I perform after surgery?** I would not recommend heavy lifting or straining immediately after surgery. You can resume heavy lifting and straining 1 week after surgery.

**When do I come in for my follow-up visit?** You should be seen 1-2 weeks following surgery.

**Will my stitches need to be removed?** All the stitches will be dissolvable, and we do not need to remove any of them.

**What are the risks of parotid surgery?** Aside from possible bleeding and infection, the major risk of parotid surgery is weakness of the facial nerve and facial asymmetry. However, the risk of permanent injury in experienced hands is in the order of 3-5%. The vast majority of patients undergoing parotid surgery however, have no problems with their facial nerve after surgery. The possibility of facial nerve injury increases if all of the parotid has to be removed (total parotidectomy). This makes sense – the more nerve branches you dissect, the more chance you have to injure the nerve.

Other minor risks include sweating of the cheek while eating (called Frey Syndrome) or temporary salivary fluid collections under the skin (sialocele or salivary fistula). These are managed fairly easily.

What should I watch out for?

Be sure to call your doctor if any of the following symptoms appear:

- Symptoms of hypoparathyroidism, which includes tingling and spasms of the extremities
- Fever
- Redness or swelling around the incision
- Warm incision
- Drainage from the incision

Will there be a scar(s)?

The area of incision normally heals very well. There is usually a light scar where the incision is made after healing is completed.

When can I return to work and resume normal activities?

Most patients are able to resume normal activities after a few weeks of rest.