

Low Blood Calcium after Thyroid Surgery (Hypocalcemia)

What is hypocalcemia?

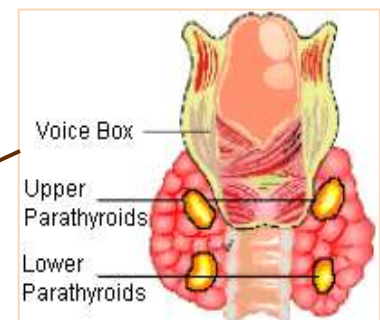
Hypocalcemia is a low calcium level in the blood. It is common after thyroid surgery. The only way to diagnose it is by doing a blood calcium level test.

What causes it?

There are four parathyroid glands. They control the amount of calcium in the blood and bones. They are normally found in the neck, behind the thyroid. Each one is about the size of a grain of rice. This makes it easy for them to be injured or removed during a thyroid procedure. If these glands are injured or removed, it often causes hypocalcemia.

What are the symptoms?

- Numbness or tingling of the:
 - Mouth or lips.
 - Hands or feet.
- Twitching or uncontrolled movements of the face or muscles.
- Muscle cramps or stiffness of the arms or legs.
- Any changes in behavior.
- A hard time breathing or noisy breathing.
- Seizures. This is rare.



Call 9-1-1 if your child has:

- A seizure.
- A hard time breathing.
- A change in color of the lips or skin.

How is it treated?

Treatment will depend on how low the calcium level is. Oral calcium supplements are normally tried first. Calcium carbonate (TUMS®) is used most often. Your child's doctor may have prescribed oral calcium supplements. Please give as prescribed. If symptoms are severe, IV calcium may be needed.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any concerns or if your child has:

- Numbness, tingling or twitching.
- Uncontrolled movements, a hard time or change when walking, or a change in behavior.
- Special healthcare needs not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.