

Hyperparathyroidism: What You Need to Know



Dignity Health Medical Group®
Merced

A Service of Dignity Health Medical Foundation



There's nobody quite like you. That's why your hyperparathyroidism care plan should be completely built around you. Our patient-centric approach will tailor treatment to your needs.

At Dignity Health Medical Group, we specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the endocrine system. We also offer a range of surgical options when necessary. Dr. Tim Beck, our endocrine surgeon, offers innovative treatment options with a dose of humankindness.

What Is Hyperparathyroidism?

The condition occurs when one or more of your four parathyroid glands are too active. Parathyroids are tiny glands in the neck, behind the thyroid gland. When they're too active, they make too much parathyroid hormone (PTH). This hormone helps control how much calcium is in your blood.

When a parathyroid gland makes too much PTH, the amount of calcium in your blood rises. Some of this calcium comes from your bones. That means that hyperparathyroidism can lead to weak bones and a greater risk of broken bones. The extra calcium in the blood can also lead to kidney stones and other health problems. Other symptoms include:

- Bone or joint pain
- Confusion
- Constipation
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Joint or bone pain
- Kidney stones
- Increased thirst or urination
- Loss of appetite
- Memory problems
- Muscle Weakness
- Nausea and vomiting
- Osteoporosis (brittle bones)
- Trouble concentrating

Some people with hyperparathyroidism may not experience symptoms when they're diagnosed. Don't ignore the common signs, schedule a consultation with Dr. Beck.

Diagnosing Hyperparathyroidism

The first step in treating hyperparathyroidism is to have the condition properly diagnosed. Dr. Beck will likely use one of the following advanced diagnostic procedures to determine if you have hyperparathyroidism:

Blood Tests

A blood test measures and analyzes different substances in your blood (calcium and PTH levels will be specifically checked). Blood tests provide helpful information for the diagnosis and management of medical conditions. Analysis of your blood can take an hour or more. When completed, Dr. Beck will discuss the blood test results, explain their meaning, and outline your next steps for treatment.

Bone Density Scans

A bone density test, also known as bone densitometry or dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA or DEXA), is the most effective method for assessing the thinning and weakening of bones. This type of scan uses X-ray technology to measure bone loss and is typically conducted on the lower spine and hips. The test helps identify decreases in bone density, assess the risk of fractures, confirm a diagnosis of osteoporosis, and monitor the effectiveness of osteoporosis treatment.

Imaging Tests

Imaging studies are painless and considered noninvasive. You may have a small needle stick into a vein though, if Dr. Beck requests imaging with intravenous (IV) contrast, which helps produce more precise images. Some scans use tiny amounts of radiation. A small amount of radiation exposure is normal. For example, sunlight and the air already expose us all to low levels of radiation every day. These tests are typically considered very safe for adults. During your initial visit, Dr. Beck will also do an ultrasound of your neck.

Treating Hyperparathyroidism

Your treatment for hyperparathyroidism will depend on your overall health, symptom severity, and treatment success likelihood. Dr. Beck will work with you to determine the best hyperparathyroidism treatment plan.

Surgery

When hyperparathyroidism is causing health problems from high calcium levels, Dr. Beck may recommend surgery. Removing the problem parathyroid gland(s) is the only treatment that can cure this condition. Surgery can also be an option for patients who don't yet have symptoms, but are concerned about possible bone or kidney problems in the future. It is a very safe treatment option, and most patients go home the same day or the following morning.

Medications

While medicine can't cure hyperparathyroidism, it may help with symptoms from high calcium or with bone strength. If you are not a candidate for surgery for a medical reason, talk to Dr. Beck about medications for better bone strength or for lowering your calcium levels.

Watchful Waiting

In mild cases, when there are no symptoms from high calcium and the calcium level is not very high, Dr. Beck may suggest watchful waiting. That means doing regular tests to look for signs that hyperparathyroidism is getting worse or causing other health problems and needs more treatment.



Taking Care of Yourself

If you have hyperparathyroidism, you can take steps to manage your condition by making lifestyle changes, such as:

- Tracking the calcium and vitamin D you get from foods, drinks, and medicines. Check with Dr. Beck about the amounts of calcium and vitamin D that are best for you.
- Try regular weight-bearing exercise, such as walking, to help your bone strength.
- Drink plenty of water. Not getting enough fluids can play a part in getting kidney stones.

**To learn more about our services and how we can help, please call
(209) 722-9272.**



ENT & Endocrine Surgery

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