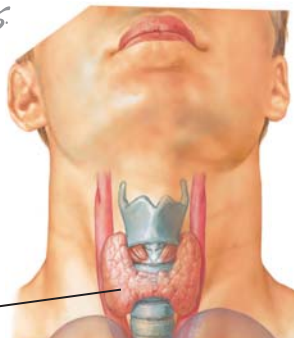


# MANAGING YOUR THYROID CANCER

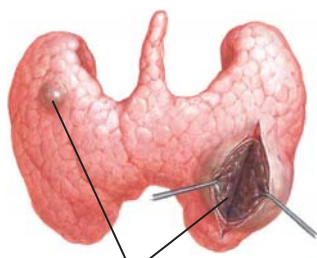
F. Netter M.D.

The thyroid gland in the neck makes hormones that control metabolism.

Thyroid



Thyroid cancers are abnormal growths that start from either thyroid follicular cells or thyroid parafollicular cells. The papillary type from follicular cells is the most common and occurs among young people.



Papillary type

About 10,000 new thyroid cancers are diagnosed each year in the United States. The cause isn't known.



Usually, a thyroid nodule (lump) in the neck is the first symptom. As the cancers grow, they spread to nearby areas and cause hoarseness, trouble swallowing, swollen lymph glands, and neck pain.



Your doctor may suspect thyroid cancer by finding a lump on your thyroid during a physical examination. For proof of cancer, your doctor can take cells from the lump by FNAB and study them with a microscope.

## What Is Thyroid Cancer?

The thyroid gland in the neck makes hormones that control metabolism. Cells in the thyroid gland are called follicular and parafollicular cells. Thyroid cancers are abnormal growths of these cells. These cancers start from either follicular cells (papillary, follicular, and anaplastic cancers) or parafollicular cells (medullary carcinoma). The papillary type is the most common. It occurs among young people. The follicular type occurs in older people. The medullary type can occur as isolated cancers or in families, as a hereditary form. The anaplastic type is aggressive and hard to treat.

About 10,000 new thyroid cancers are diagnosed each year in the United States.

## What Causes Thyroid Cancer?

The cause is unknown. Radiation exposure is a risk for this cancer, especially in children who have radiation therapy to the head, neck, or upper chest during infancy or childhood. Thyroid cancer isn't contagious.

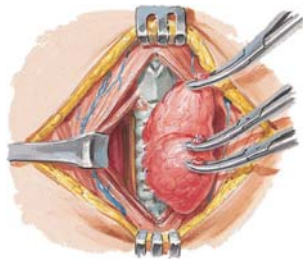
## What Are the Symptoms of Thyroid Cancer?

Usually, a thyroid nodule (lump) is the first symptom. As the cancers grow, they usually spread to nearby areas and cause hoarseness, trouble swallowing, swollen lymph glands, and neck pain.

## How Is Thyroid Cancer Diagnosed?

The doctor may suspect thyroid cancer by finding a lump on the thyroid during a physical examination. For proof of cancer, cells are taken from the lump by fine-needle aspiration biopsy (FNAB) and studied with a microscope. In this type of biopsy, the doctor uses a needle to get a sample.

## MANAGING YOUR THYROID CANCER



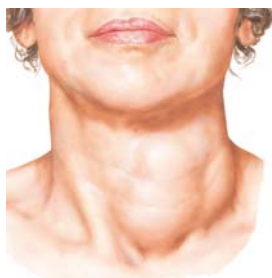
Thyroidectomy

The type of treatment depends on whether the cancer has spread. Treatment can be surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy. Surgical removal of the thyroid is called thyroidectomy. Radioactive iodine can be used after surgery or to treat spread of cancer.

If the whole thyroid is removed, you'll need to take thyroid replacement hormone for the rest of your life. If only part is removed, you may also need hormone to stop growth of remaining thyroid tissue.



Don't miss follow-up doctor appointments. Careful neck examinations, blood tests, and thyroid scans are done to make sure that the cancer hasn't returned.



Call your doctor if you find a lump in your neck or are hoarse; have hand tremors, diarrhea, sweats, and palpitations; can't tolerate cold or have a raspy voice or constipation; or have numbness around your mouth, tips of your fingers, and feet with muscle spasms.



### How Is Thyroid Cancer Treated?

Treatment can be surgery, radiation therapy, or chemotherapy. Type of treatment depends on whether the cancer has spread.

Removal of the thyroid, either part or the whole gland, is called thyroidectomy. Complications of surgery include injury to vocal cords.

If the whole thyroid is removed, thyroid replacement medicine is taken for the rest of life. If only part is removed, hormone may also be given to stop growth of remaining thyroid tissue.

Radioactive iodine can be used after surgery or to treat spread of cancer. Radioactive iodine kills normal and cancer cells.

Chemotherapy is used if other treatments don't work.

### DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Thyroid Cancer:

- ✓ **DO** take your prescribed medicines.
- ✓ **DO** find a surgeon with experience in thyroid operations.
- ✓ **DO** remember that the earlier the cancer is found, the better the chances of cure.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you find a lump in your neck or are hoarse.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have hand tremors (shaking), diarrhea, sweats, and palpitations. You may be taking too much thyroid medicine after surgery.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you cannot tolerate cold, have a raspy voice, are constipated, lose eyebrow hair, or gain weight. You may be taking too little thyroid medicine.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if after surgery you have numbness around your mouth, tips of your fingers, and feet, with muscle spasms of your hands, legs, or face. You can have a low calcium level.
- ⊘ **DON'T** miss follow-up doctor appointments. Careful neck examinations, blood tests, and thyroid scans are done to make sure the cancer hasn't returned.

#### FROM THE DESK OF

#### NOTES

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

##### Contact the following sources:

- National Cancer Institute  
Tel: (800) 4-CANCER (422-6237)  
Website: <http://www.cancer.gov>
- American Cancer Society  
Tel: (800) 227-2345  
Website: <http://www.cancer.org>