

HORMONES AND THYROID CANCER

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Thyroid cancer is the most common form of cancer in the endocrine system, which includes the glands that produce hormones in your body. Cancer occurs when lumps, or nodules, grow in the thyroid gland. These nodules are not usually cancerous, but if they are, they can be treated effectively. Rarely, they can be life threatening.

The thyroid gland is a butterfly shaped gland at the front of the neck. It uses iodine, a mineral found in some foods and in iodized salt, to make hormones that help your body. The thyroid hormones control your metabolism and affect your weight and your brain function as well as maintaining your heart, skin, hair, and intestines.



THYROID NODULES

CELLS IN THE THYROID THAT FORM A TUMOR

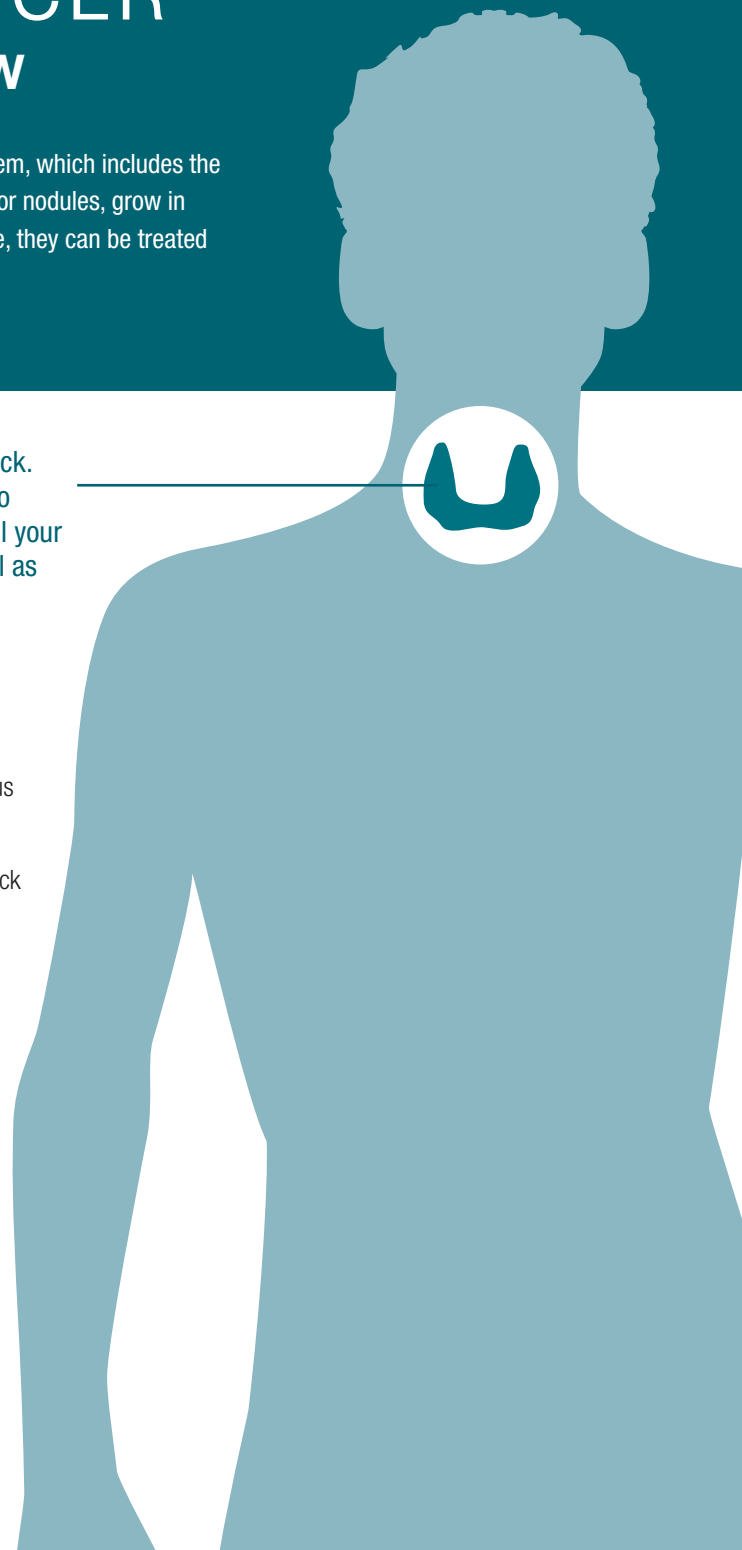
- More than 90% are not harmful, but some can be cancerous
- Fewer than 1 in 10 nodules is cancerous
- Signs of thyroid cancer include a swelling or lump in the neck
- Cancer is confirmed with a fine needle biopsy or by testing a nodule removed in surgery. Doctors can also detect nodules with a “neck check”.



THYROID CANCER MAY NOT ALWAYS HAVE SYMPTOMS

See your doctor if you notice:

- a lump or swelling in your neck
- a hoarse voice
- difficulty swallowing
- neck or throat pain
- a swollen lymph node in your neck



Visit [endocrine.org](https://www.endocrine.org) for more information.

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Sources: American Cancer Society and National Institutes of Health

CANCER DIAGNOSIS

Tests that examine the thyroid, neck, and blood are used to detect (find) and diagnose thyroid cancer.

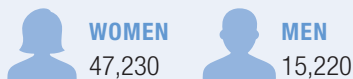
TYPES OF THYROID CANCERS

- **PAPILLARY:** the most common (80% of cases); slow growing; may develop in one or both lobes of the thyroid gland; and may spread to lymph nodes in the neck.
- **FOLLICULAR:** the 2nd most common; found more in countries with lack of iodine; grows slowly and is highly treatable.
- **MEDULLARY:** less common; more likely to run in families; more likely to spread to lymph nodes and other organs.
- **ANAPLASTIC:** very rare and very aggressive; quickly spreads to other parts of the neck and body.

THYROID CANCER IS THE #1 FASTEST GROWING CANCER IN THE U.S.

(IN BOTH MEN AND WOMEN)

New cases per year: 62,450



Occurs nearly 3 times more often in women than in men. Seen most often in women in their 40s and 50s and men in their 60s and 70s.

Age, gender, and exposure to radiation can affect the risk, and 2 out of 3 cases occur in people younger than age 55.

YOU ARE AT GREATER RISK IF YOU:

- Are between ages 25 and 65
- Are a woman
- Are Caucasian
- Have a family member who has had thyroid disease
- Have had exposure to radiation, especially as a child from exposure to a nuclear reactor accident or from radiation treatments for another cancer.



TREATMENT

If your doctor confirms the presence of cancerous nodules in the thyroid, you will likely need to have your thyroid gland removed. Treatment may vary with each person, these include;

- Surgical operation
- One-time radioactive iodine treatment
- Hormone therapy
- Chemotherapy (rare)

Patients have questions. We have answers.

Endocrine Society is your trusted source for endocrine patient education.

Our free, online resources are available at endocrine.org/patient-engagement