

THYROID CANCER

Thyroid cancer is malignant cell growth of cells of the butterfly-shaped thyroid gland located at the base of the throat. There are different forms of thyroid cancers; most thyroid cancers are curable, if well-differentiated and detected early. However, early detection is difficult due to the lack of visible symptoms.

Thyroid cancer affects individuals of any age, race, or gender. The condition mostly affects adults between the ages

of 20 and 70, and is found more often in women. Additional risk factors can include exposure to radiation as a child, and having a family history of thyroid disease (including related genetic conditions). Studies suggest that thyroid cancer occurs less frequently in persons of African descent, and if it occurs, it may be diagnosed in more advanced stages.

Common physical signs include neck pain, a visible lump in the neck, swollen

lymph nodes, difficulty swallowing, and changes to the voice. Having these signs does not mean a person has thyroid cancer, but may also indicate other conditions. A possible biopsy can give a definitive answer.

Common treatment plans include but are not limited to surgical removal of the gland or portions thereof, radiation therapy, and chemotherapy.

Healthy patient with the head slightly tilted backwards to expose the thyroid gland in the neck

Patient with thyroid cancer

Physical signs can include, but are not limited to:

*Difficulty swallowing
Hoarseness
Neck pain*

Thyroid cartilage

Butterfly-shaped thyroid gland

Trachea

Visibly enlarged lymph node

Visible goiter

Thyroid cancer

Enlarged thyroid gland

