

## Thyroid cancer

### Introduction about the Disease:

The thyroid gland is a butterfly-shaped gland that sits low on the front of the neck, and regulates blood pressure, heart rate, body temperature, weight and other vital functions. Thyroid cancer is a rare form of cancer that is most common in people in their 30s and those over the age of 60. Women are two to three times more likely to develop it than men.

### Types of thyroid cancer:

- Papillary thyroid carcinoma (the most common type).
- Medullary thyroid carcinoma.
- Anaplastic thyroid carcinoma.
- Follicular thyroid carcinoma.
- Hurtle cell thyroid cancer.

### Causes of Thyroid Cancer:

Thyroid cancer occurs when a change to the DNA in the cells in the thyroid causes them to grow uncontrollably. It is still unclear what causes this.

**There are a number of things that can increase the risk of developing thyroid cancer, these include:**

1. Certain thyroid conditions, such as an inflamed thyroid (thyroiditis) or goiter (disclaimer: an overactive thyroid or underactive thyroid does not cause thyroid cancer).
2. Family history.
3. Excessive exposure to radiation during childhood.

### Symptoms of Thyroid Cancer:

1. A painless lump or swelling in the front of the neck.
2. Unexplained changes to the voice, including increasing hoarseness and difficulty speaking.
3. Pain in the neck.
4. Difficulty swallowing or breathing.

### Prevention:

1. Reduce exposure to various types of radiation as much as possible.
2. Get early screening tests if:
  - The patient was exposed to radiation during childhood.
  - There is a family history of thyroid cancer (the entire family must undergo screening tests).
  - The patient suffers from swelling in the thyroid gland or thyroiditis.

### Treatment:

1. Surgical intervention.
2. Radiation therapy.
3. Chemotherapy.

It is important to consult your doctor before using any medication and follow up with the specialist regularly after recovery.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

- **What are the possible health risks of thyroid surgery?**

Complications of thyroid surgery are very rare, but if they occur, they may include bleeding and damage to the gland and surrounding tissue. After the operation, the patient may develop a hoarse voice for a temporary period of time, or in some cases permanently if the laryngeal nerve sustained injury.

- **Are people with deeper hoarse voices more susceptible to thyroid cancer?**

No, hoarseness may be a symptom of various conditions, and not a cause for thyroid cancer.

- **Are the chances of treating thyroid cancer low?**

No, in fact thyroid cancer treatment success rates are very good, and many patients fully recover and live a long life.

#### Misconceptions:

1. Only old people are at risk of developing thyroid cancer  
. **This is not true.** All age groups are at risk of developing thyroid cancer.
2. Feeling a lump in the neck means you have thyroid cancer  
. **This is not true.** The presence of a lump or swelling in the neck may be the result of other conditions, such as suffering from a cold or a flu. However, it is advisable to visit your doctor to make sure there are no other symptoms.

#### Clinical Health Education Department

For more information, please contact us by email on:

[Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa](mailto:Hpromotion@moh.gov.sa)