

doctor will feel your neck, thyroid, voice box and lymph nodes for unusual growths or swelling.

The doctor will order a blood test to look at thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) levels, an altered RET gene and increased levels of calcium. Additionally, your doctor may ask you to have an ultrasonography and radioscanning, which is a nuclear medical scan that uses small amounts of radioactive material to make the thyroid nodules apparent.

What is the treatment for this type of cancer?

There are many treatment options for thyroid cancer patients.

Surgery is the most common option and it is used to remove all or a part of the thyroid depending upon the type, stage and size of the cancer.

Radiation therapy is another option which destroys cancer cells using high-energy x-rays. Radioactive iodine therapy is also used where radioactive iodine (I-131), administered via the mouth, destroys thyroid cancer cells anywhere in the body.

Hormonal therapy is also available for you. This type of cancer treatment removes hormones and stops cancer cells from growing. Because this treatment kills thyroid cells, the thyroid is not able to make enough thyroid hormones so you usually have to take thyroid hormone pills to compensate for this lost function for the remainder of your life.

Many of these treatments can be combined. So, it

is usually good to get a second opinion before starting any therapy. The type of treatment depends on many factors such as how big the cancer is, how much it has spread, your age and overall health.

How can I prevent thyroid cancer?

There is no known prevention. Like any other cancer, early detection is the key. You should get a yearly physical examination from your healthcare provider, consume a healthy diet that is low in fats and processed foods, exercise regularly, maintain a healthy weight and reduce your exposure to chemicals, x-ray and radiation-producing objects to reduce the risk of thyroid cancer.

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INFORMATION ON THYROID CANCER



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What is thyroid cancer?

Thyroid cancer starts in the thyroid gland, which is located inside the front of your lower neck, just above the voice box. The thyroid gland produces and stores hormones that help control the heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, the rate at which the body converts food into energy, and the amount of calcium in the blood. These hormones are essential for every cell in your body to function properly.

There are four different types of thyroid cancer:

- 1 Papillary thyroid cancer** – It is the most common type of thyroid cancer. It forms in the follicular cells of the thyroid and grows slowly; it is more common in women than men, usually occurring before the age of 45.
- 2 Follicular thyroid cancer** – This type of cancer also forms in the follicular cells. It grows slowly and is treatable if detected early.
- 3 Medullary thyroid cancer** – This type of thyroid cancer occurs in the C cells of the thyroid, which produce a hormone that controls the amount of calcium in the blood.
- 4 Anaplastic thyroid cancer** – This cancer is rare, occurring in 1-2 per cent of cases, and is aggressive. The cancer cells in this type look different from normal thyroid cells.

What are its symptoms?

Common symptoms of thyroid cancer include a

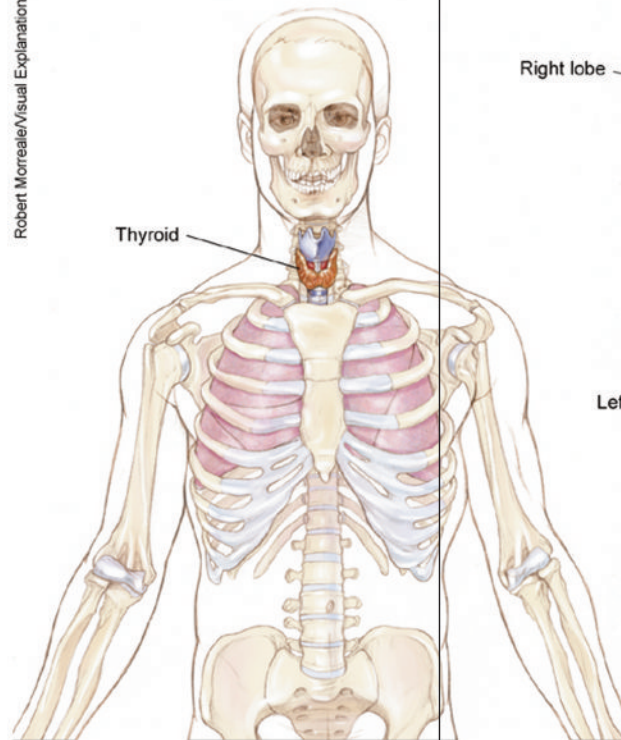
lump or nodule in the front of your neck, coughing, hoarseness or difficulty speaking in your normal voice, swollen lymph nodes particularly in the neck, and difficulty swallowing or breathing, or pain in your throat and neck.

However, these symptoms are not a sure sign of cancer. An infection, a benign goiter or another problem can also cause similar symptoms.

What are the risk factors associated with thyroid cancer?

- 1 Exposure to radiation** – If you have been exposed to high levels of radiation, you are at a higher risk to develop papillary or follicular thyroid cancer.
- 2 Family history** – Medullary thyroid cancer can be caused by a change or alteration in a gene called RET, which can be passed genetically.
- 3 Gender** – Women are two to three times

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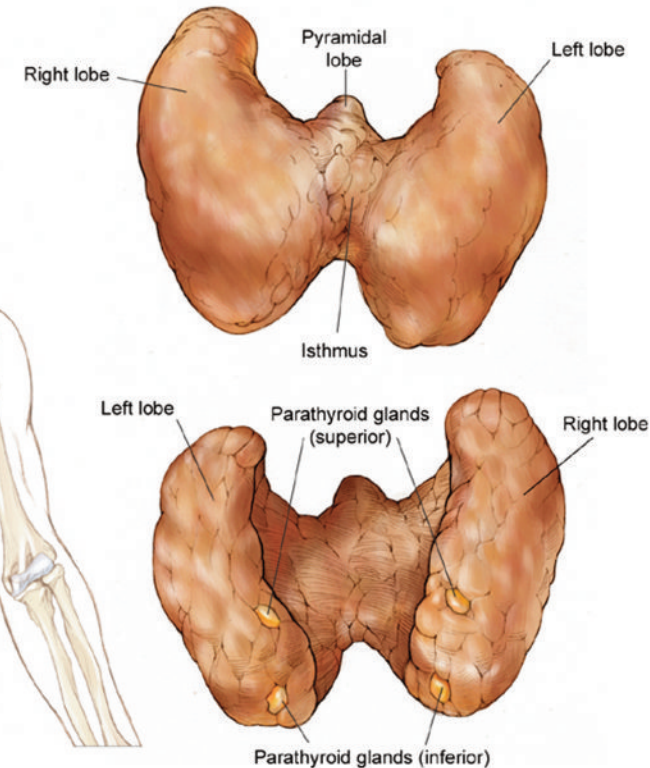


more likely to develop this cancer.

- 4 Age** – Most patients with thyroid cancer are over the age of 40.
- 5 Diet** – If you consume a diet deficient in iodine, you can develop this type of cancer.

What exams and tests will I have to take in order to confirm the diagnosis?

If you have symptoms that suggest thyroid cancer, your doctor will examine your family medical history and conduct a physical exam during which the



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