

Primary Thyroid Lymphoma

FAQ

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WHAT IS THE THYROID GLAND?

The thyroid gland located in the neck produces thyroid hormones which help the body use energy, stay warm and keep the brain, heart, muscles, and other organs working normally.

1 CAUSES

In thyroid lymphoma, the thyroid gland becomes enlarged and firm, which often causes difficulty swallowing, shortness of breath, swelling in the face, and/or a hoarse voice. Some patients may also experience more generalized symptoms associated with lymphoma, such as fever, night sweats, and unintentional weight loss.

2 SYMPTOMS

Thyroid lymphoma is a cancer of white blood cells, or lymphocytes, that occurs within the thyroid gland. A specific cause has not been identified, but it is more likely to occur in people who have Hashimoto's thyroiditis (see *Hashimoto's thyroiditis brochure*), which is an autoimmune condition where the lymphocytes invade the thyroid gland. Thyroid lymphoma affects women more than men, and most commonly occurs between the ages of 65 to 75 years.

3 DIAGNOSIS

There are no blood tests to evaluate for thyroid lymphoma. Patients will usually notice a swelling in their neck, and an ultrasound will show an enlarged thyroid gland and sometimes enlarged lymph nodes surrounding the gland. The diagnosis can be made by a biopsy of the thyroid.

4 TREATMENT

Unlike other forms of thyroid cancer, thyroid lymphoma is not treated by surgical removal of the thyroid gland. Instead, it is treated with chemotherapy, radiation treatment, or a combination of the two. Treatment is usually directed by a medical oncologist (a cancer specialist) or hematologist.



FURTHER READING

Further details on this and other thyroid-related topics are available in the patient information section on the American Thyroid Association® website at www.thyroid.org.

