



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Thyroid Cancer

If you've been diagnosed with thyroid cancer, it's important to work closely with your doctor to plan the best treatment possible. Asking the right questions during your conversation will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Thyroid Gland	A small gland at the front of your neck that makes thyroid hormones.
Goiter	A benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous) enlargement or growth of the thyroid gland.
Thyroid Hormone	Thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3) are both made by the thyroid gland. More T4 than T3 is released into the blood. The T4 converts to T3, which is the hormone that acts on your body to control your metabolism. Thyroid cancer can alter the body's levels of T4 and T3.
Hypothyroid	A lack of thyroid hormones, which causes low energy, cold intolerance, weight gain, depression, constipation, and dry skin.
Hyperthyroid	An excess of thyroid hormones, which causes agitation, irritability, insomnia, increased appetite, weight loss, and sweating.
Thyroid Stimulating Hormone (TSH)	The hormone that stimulates the thyroid gland to make thyroid hormones. TSH is released from the pituitary gland in the brain in response to your body's metabolic needs. TSH can be altered with thyroid cancer.
Thyroid Antibodies	Autoimmune cells that fight against your thyroid gland, which can be associated with thyroid cancer.
Radioactive Iodine (RAI)	An iodine treatment that can destroy cells in the thyroid gland, RAI is sometimes used as a treatment for thyroid cancer.
Biopsy	A sample of tissue taken for examination under a microscope. Fine needle biopsies, which are minimally invasive and only sample a small amount of tissue, are often used to diagnose thyroid cancer. Sometimes, a larger biopsy is obtained surgically.
Resection	Removal of the whole thyroid gland or part of the thyroid gland is described as a complete or partial resection.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your thyroid cancer.

About Symptoms

- Can thyroid cancer cause depression?
- Does thyroid cancer affect weight?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Is thyroid cancer hereditary?
- Did I get thyroid cancer from X-rays or other radiation exposure?

About Diagnosis

- Is a biopsy necessary to diagnose my condition?
- Do I need to have more imaging tests?

About Treatment

- Should I have my whole thyroid gland removed?
- Can my cancer recur if only part of my thyroid is removed?
- Can my cancer recur after radioactive iodine treatment?
- Will I still have thyroid hormone after my thyroid cancer treatment?

About Coping

- Are there ways to improve my energy level?
- Is there a certain diet I should follow?

About Living With Thyroid Cancer

- Are there foods or supplements that replace thyroid hormones?
- Should I avoid iodine or take iodine supplements?
