



THYROID CANCER IN ADULTS (AGE 20 YEARS AND OLDER)

What is Thyroid Cancer?

Thyroid cancer is a cancer of the thyroid gland which is located under the Adam's apple in the front part of the neck. While thyroid cancer is relatively uncommon, it is the most common cancer of the endocrine system which is the system of glands secreting hormones to regulate our bodies. Thyroid cancer incidence rates (rate of new cancer cases) have increased over the last decade with more substantial increases observed in women than in men. However, the reason for this increase remains unknown.

What are the Risk Factors for Thyroid Cancer?

Risk factors alter a person's chance of getting a disease. However, having a risk factor does not mean you will get the disease. Few risk factors are known to increase thyroid cancer risk. These risk factors include:

- Female gender
- Asian race
- History of radiation treatment in infancy or childhood for conditions of the head and neck (enlarged thymus or tonsils, acne, and fungal infections of the scalp)
- Radiation therapy for childhood cancers such as Hodgkin lymphoma (radiation therapy in adulthood carries little thyroid cancer risk)
- Radiation exposure from nuclear fallout, especially during childhood
- Hereditary thyroid conditions

What are the Symptoms for Thyroid Cancer?

The following symptoms could be caused by thyroid cancer. A doctor should be consulted if any of these problems occur. Thyroid cancer symptoms include:

- A lump or swelling in the neck, sometimes growing rapidly
- A pain in the front of the neck, sometimes going up to the ears
- Hoarseness or other persistent voice changes
- Difficulty swallowing
- Difficulty breathing
- A persistent cough without a cold

Who gets Thyroid Cancer?

In California, the five-year age-adjusted incidence rate for thyroid cancer is 9.8 per 100,000 population.

- Women are affected by thyroid cancer more often than men.
- Risk is highest among Asian/Pacific Islanders followed closely by non-Hispanic whites.
- Thyroid cancer typically occurs between the ages of 25 and 65 years.

What are the Treatments for Thyroid Cancer?

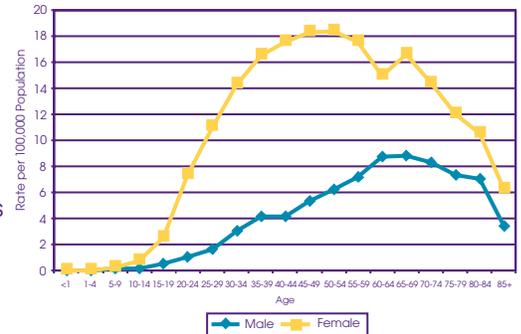
Treatment options depend on the stage and subtype of thyroid cancer. Surgery through a total thyroidectomy (removal of the thyroid gland) or lobectomy (removal of one lobe of the thyroid gland) is the therapy of choice for most thyroid cancers. This is often combined with radioactive iodine treatment to decrease risk of thyroid cancer recurrence. Other treatments include thyroid hormone therapy, external beam radiation therapy and chemotherapy.

Who Survives Thyroid Cancer?

Relative survival compares survival between a group of cancer patients to a group of cancer-free individuals. Values less than 100 percent indicate cancer shortens life in the given population. Five-year relative thyroid cancer survival varies by tumor grade, a system for classifying cancer cells based on the degree of abnormality in the cell. Well differentiated cancer cells more closely resemble normal cells while poorly differentiated cancer cells contain many abnormalities. Differentiated tumors are highly treatable and usually curable. In contrast, poorly differentiated tumors are less common, more aggressive, spread to other parts of the body earlier and have poorer prognosis.

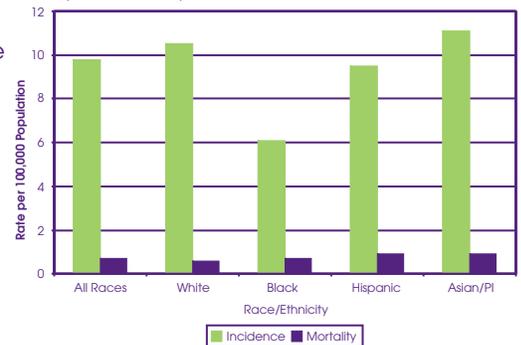
Grade	Five-Year Relative Survival
Well Differentiated (Grade I)	99.6%
Moderately Differentiated (Grade II)	98.7%
Poorly Differentiated (Grade III)	72.8%
Undifferentiated; Anaplastic (Grade IV)	16.9%

Five-year Age-Specific Thyroid Cancer Incidence Rates, by Sex, California, 2001-2005



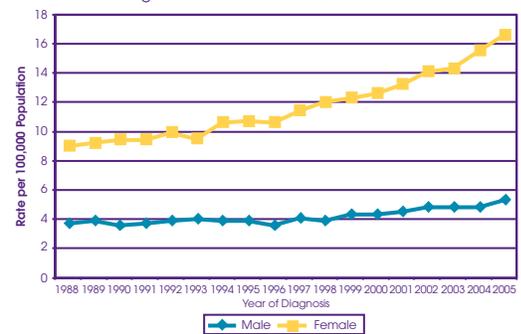
Prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Cancer Surveillance Section.

Age-Adjusted Thyroid Cancer Incidence and Mortality Rates, by Race/Ethnicity, California, 2001-2005



Prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Cancer Surveillance Section.

Age-Adjusted Thyroid Cancer Incidence Rates, by Sex and Year of Diagnosis, California, 1988-2005



Prepared by the California Department of Public Health, Cancer Surveillance Section.



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