Thyroid Cancer

What Is Thyroid Cancer?

Thyroid cancer occurs when abnormal cells grow in the thyroid gland, a small, butterfly-shaped gland located at the front of your neck. The thyroid plays a key role in regulating metabolism, energy levels, and hormone production.

Thyroid cancer is less common than other cancers and is usually treatable, especially when diagnosed early. Many people with thyroid cancer have a good prognosis, with effective treatment options available.

What Are The Types Of Thyroid Cancer?

There are several types of thyroid cancer, including:

- **Papillary thyroid cancer** – the most common type, usually slow-growing and highly treatable
- **Follicular thyroid cancer** – less common but also treatable if detected early
- **Medullary thyroid cancer** – a rare form that may be linked to genetic conditions
- **Anaplastic thyroid cancer** – the rarest and most aggressive type, often requiring urgent treatment

What Are The Symptoms Of Thyroid Cancer?

Thyroid cancer may not cause symptoms in the early stages. However, as it develops, you may notice:

- **A lump or swelling in the neck** – often painless but gradually increasing in size
- **Hoarseness or voice changes** – if the cancer affects the vocal cords
- **Difficulty swallowing** – if the tumour presses on the oesophagus
- **A persistent cough** – not linked to a cold or infection

- **Neck pain or discomfort** – which may radiate to the ears
- **Swollen lymph nodes** – a sign that the cancer may have spread

If you have any of these symptoms, especially a lump in your neck that does not go away, you should see a doctor for further assessment.

How Is Thyroid Cancer Diagnosed?

To diagnose thyroid cancer, your doctor may perform:

- **A physical examination** – checking for lumps, swelling, or enlarged lymph nodes
- **Thyroid function blood tests** – to measure thyroid hormone levels, although these are usually normal in thyroid cancer
- **Ultrasound scan** – to assess the size and structure of the thyroid and detect abnormal nodules
- **Fine needle aspiration biopsy (FNA)** – a small sample of thyroid tissue is taken to check for cancerous cells
- **CT or MRI scans** – if cancer has spread beyond the thyroid gland

How Is Thyroid Cancer Treated?

Treatment for thyroid cancer depends on the type, size, and stage of the cancer. The main treatment options include:

- **Total thyroidectomy** – removal of the entire thyroid gland, often required for larger or more advanced cancers

- **Partial thyroidectomy (lobectomy)** – removal of part of the thyroid if the cancer is small and confined

Radioactive iodine therapy

- Used after surgery to destroy any remaining thyroid cancer cells
- Helps reduce the risk of recurrence, especially for papillary and follicular thyroid cancers

Thyroid hormone replacement therapy

- If the thyroid is removed, lifelong levothyroxine tablets are needed to replace thyroid hormones and prevent cancer recurrence

- Used in rare, aggressive thyroid cancers like anaplastic thyroid cancer
- Helps shrink tumours and manage advanced disease

What Is The Prognosis For Thyroid Cancer?

Most types of thyroid cancer have an excellent prognosis, particularly papillary and follicular thyroid cancer, which have high survival rates when treated early.

Regular follow-up appointments and monitoring are important to check for any signs of recurrence and ensure your thyroid hormone levels remain stable.

Why Choose Birmingham Head And Neck Clinic?

At Birmingham Head and Neck Clinic, we provide expert diagnosis, treatment, and ongoing care for thyroid cancer. Our experienced team offers:

- Advanced thyroid imaging and diagnostic services
- Expert surgical care for thyroid cancer treatment
- Personalised treatment plans tailored to your condition
- Ongoing monitoring and support to ensure long-term health

Contact Us

If you have concerns about thyroid cancer or have been diagnosed and need treatment, our specialist team is here to help. Early detection and expert treatment are key to successful thyroid cancer management. Get in touch today to discuss your care.