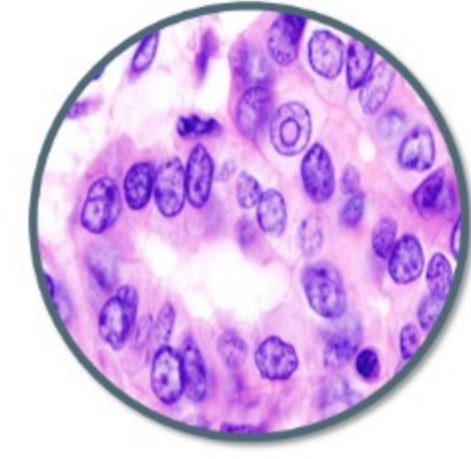


FACT SHEET

Papillary thyroid cancer



What is thyroid cancer?

Thyroid cancer is a malignant tumor arising from the thyrocytes or parafollicular cells of the thyroid glands. It is relatively rare, compared to other cancers. Its presentation is more common in women, especially between the ages of 30 and 50.

What is papillary thyroid cancer?

Papillary cancer is the most common type of thyroid cancer, constituting 70-80% of them. Papillary cancer can occur at any age. It tends to grow slowly and often spreads to the lymph nodes in the neck.

1 CAUSES

What causes papillary thyroid cancer?

Papillary thyroid cancer is associated with mutations that increase the activity of the RET/PTC or BRAF genes. Similarly, it is more common in patients with a history of childhood radiation exposure of the thyroid gland, and in those with a family history of thyroid cancer.

2 SYMPTOMS

What are the symptoms of papillary thyroid cancer?

The main sign is a lump or nodule in the thyroid, as well as the presence of palpable cervical lymph nodes. However, most cancers do not cause any symptoms. In case of presenting symptomatic nodules, pain in the neck, jaw or ear may occur. If the nodule is large enough to compress the trachea or esophagus it can cause difficulty breathing, swallowing or a "tingle" in the throat. Rarely, it can cause hoarseness if a nerve that controls the vocal cords is irritated.

3 DIAGNOSIS

How is papillary thyroid cancer diagnosed?

The diagnosis of thyroid cancer is suspected by measuring the TSH hormone in the blood, which is usually normal or elevated, as well as by obtaining ultrasound images. The confirmatory study is carried out by fine needle aspiration biopsy, once the nodule has been removed by surgery.

4 TREATMENT

What is the treatment for papillary thyroid cancer?

The main treatment for all forms of thyroid cancer is surgery. The extent of the surgery (hemithyroidectomy or total thyroidectomy) will depend on the size of the tumor and whether or not it is limited to the thyroid. After surgery, most patients need to take thyroid hormone for life. If the cancer within the thyroid is large or has spread to the lymph nodes in the neck, or if a high risk of recurrence is suspected, radioactive iodine may be used after surgery.

What kind of follow-up do patients with papillary thyroid cancer need?

Patients with papillary thyroid cancer require serial medical visits to assess for recurrence. These visits consist of a careful history and physical examination along with ultrasound to visualize the neck and look for nodules.

What is the prognosis for papillary thyroid cancer?

Patients with papillary cancer confined within the thyroid gland itself have an excellent prognosis, with a 5-year survival rate of >90%.



Otolaryngologist with a high specialty in head and neck cancer surgery.

Dr. Adolfo Montemayor

Cirujano especialista en cáncer de tiroides