

Thyroid disease is common in the US—learn more about signs, symptoms

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There are 20 million people in the United States who suffer from thyroid disease. According to the National Cancer Institute, Kentucky has a higher rate of thyroid cancer than the rest of the country.

The thyroid gland is an organ that sits in the neck and controls the body's metabolism. The metabolism processes the food you consume and turns it into energy. Around 50% of the population develops [thyroid nodules](#), yet only 5% of these nodules are malignant.

There are two types of [thyroid disease](#): overactive and underactive. With overactive thyroid disease (hyperthyroidism), there is an excess of the thyroid hormone in the body which leads to the [metabolic rate](#) rising. This can lead to panic attacks, anxiety, heat intolerance, [hair loss](#), and palpitations of the heart.

The metabolic rate lowers when there is too little thyroid hormone being released (hypothyroidism). Depression, [weight gain](#), and thinning of the hair are all symptoms of an underactive thyroid.

Hashimoto's disease versus Graves' disease. Hashimoto's is the most common thyroid disease, leading to hypothyroidism. Graves' is more dangerous than Hashimoto's because of the excess amount of thyroid hormone being pumped into the body can lead to hyperthyroidism.

What to look for. To monitor your thyroid health at home, there is a self-examination you can perform called "check the neck." In this process, you are feeling for a lump, or nodule, on the thyroid gland.

Touch the thyroid gland where it sits over your airway on the neck. If you feel a lump—don't panic. You can check in with your primary care provider for further care. Typically, an ultrasound is the best way to diagnose thyroid disease or cancer, followed by a biopsy on the nodule.

One of the first ways to check for a problem with your thyroid is to go to your primary care provider and get a [blood test](#). This cannot diagnose [thyroid cancer](#) but can check your levels of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH). This blood test can rule out conditions like hypothyroidism or

hyperthyroidism.

The prognosis of thyroid cancer is very favorable. There is a combination of surgical therapy and other therapies indicated for this cancer.

If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your primary care provider.

Provided by University of Kentucky

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