

# Thyroid nodules

## What are thyroid nodules?

Thyroid nodules are round or oval-shaped growths in the thyroid gland.

Thyroid nodules are common and are not usually harmful to a person's health. But sometimes, thyroid nodules are caused by a serious condition, such as cancer.

The thyroid gland makes a hormone called "thyroid hormone." Most thyroid nodules do not change the amount of thyroid hormone in the body. But some cause the thyroid gland to make too much thyroid hormone. This can cause symptoms.

## What tests do I need for evaluation?

Tests usually include blood tests and an imaging test of the thyroid called an ultrasound. Sometimes, people need more tests. These include:

- Fine needle aspiration – For this test, a doctor uses a thin needle to remove a small sample of cells from the thyroid nodule. Then another doctor looks at the cells under a microscope. These tests can help doctors decide which nodules should be removed by surgery and which nodules can be watched.
- Thyroid scan – People get this test only if they have too much thyroid hormone in the body. For this test, a person gets a pill or a shot with a small amount of a radioactive substance. Then, a special camera takes a picture of the thyroid gland. This test is not safe for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

## What treatment is available for the thyroid nodules?

Thyroid nodules are treated in different ways, depending on their cause and how much thyroid hormone is in the body. Different treatments include:

- Watching and waiting – Most of the nodules can be watched and monitored. Especially if it is small and doesn't look serious or after a benign biopsy. This means you might have another thyroid ultrasound and sometimes another fine needle aspiration.
- A procedure to drain fluid from the thyroid nodule, if it is filled with fluid
- Surgery to remove one or both sides of the thyroid, especially if the nodule is concerning for cancer or if it is large and causing obstructive symptoms