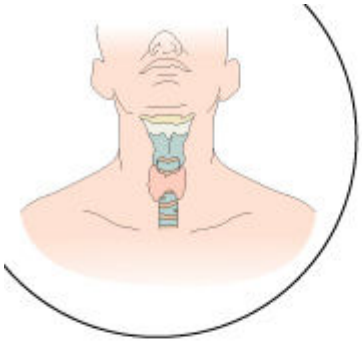
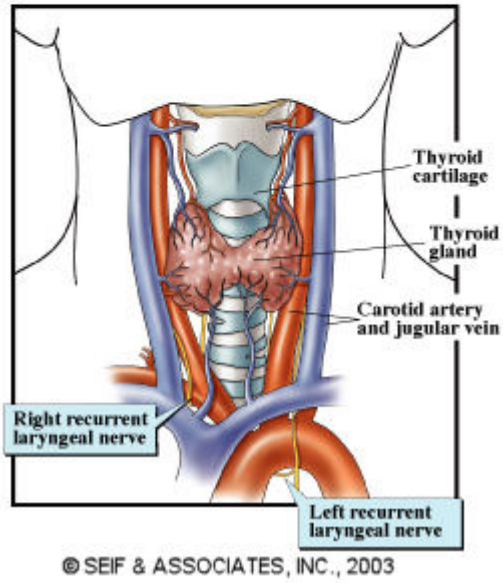
Thyroid Cyst

The thyroid gland is the large gland in your neck. It is located in the front of your neck, under the skin and muscle layers. The thyroid works to make thyroid hormone. Thyroid hormone has an effect on nearly all tissues of the body. It increases cellular activity (*metabolism*). Metabolism is the breakdown and use of food in our body.



Some times a cyst may develop in the thyroid gland. A thyroid cyst is a fluid-filled sac located in the thyroid gland. Cysts may be small or large. They may develop slowly or appear suddenly. Some cysts may be entirely made up of fluid, while others contain some portions of thyroid tissue. Most cysts of the thyroid are benign. This means they are not cancerous.



SYMPTOMS

Hemorrhage (bleeding) may occur within the cyst and, if severe, may get larger and produce problems in the neck.

- Some of the problems caused include swelling in the neck which may produce pain and difficult swallowing. If the vocal cords are compressed, it may cause hoarseness.
- If the windpipe is compressed, it may cause difficulty breathing.

DIAGNOSIS

Diagnosis of a cyst in the thyroid is made by seeing or feeling an enlargement in the neck. This may be confirmed by an ultrasound of the neck. This is a specialized type of picture which is made by bouncing sound waves off the thyroid gland. Sometimes the cysts are drained using a fine needle. The fluid is then sent to the lab where it can be examined. This is done to see if any cells in the fluid are cancerous. Some cysts may harbor a small thyroid *cancer* (tumor). Sometimes cysts are removed surgically. This is an operation performed to remove the cyst. If they are found to be cancerous, they will need further treatment.

TREATMENT

- If the fluid in your neck does not show evidence of cancer, your caregiver may just want to follow you with yearly ultrasounds or as suggested.
- Even though most of the thyroid lumps and bumps and cysts are not cancerous, follow your caregiver's instructions for follow-up.
- Keep follow-up exams and testing as instructed.

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