

The Thyroid Gland



The treatment you had can sometimes lead to problems with your thyroid gland, which lies in your neck, in front of your windpipe, and is involved in helping to control your metabolism. The treatment you had may have included radiotherapy directly to your neck or in the region of your head or upper chest. Even radiotherapy to the upper part of the spine can cause effects on the thyroid gland.

Your doctors will want to do regular blood checks to see if your thyroid is working effectively or showing signs of stress. You may be quite well but the blood tests show that your thyroid gland is not coping with its job as well as it should. This means that the gland is working too hard and this may not be healthy in the future. It may even increase the chance of tumours developing in the thyroid. Under these circumstances it may be necessary to take a small dose of hormone (thyroxine) tablets to help the thyroid cope better – your doctor will advise you if this is appropriate.

Some people do develop signs of an under active thyroid but this is unusual – the signs are that you feel the cold more than you used to, your skin becomes drier, you get tired easily, can't concentrate, get constipated and gain weight. If you do become unwell with an under active thyroid, you must take hormone (thyroxine) tablets every day to keep you well.

Anyone who has had radiotherapy to the thyroid should have their neck examined for lumps or irregularities in the thyroid gland at regular intervals. Usually a simple examination of the neck by your doctor is sufficient but a scan (ultrasound) may be recommended. Lumps occurring in a thyroid gland after radiotherapy usually need to be removed surgically by a specialist thyroid surgeon.



I didn't beat cancer to spend the rest of my life worrying!

Vanessa Moss

visit www.aftercure.org for tips, advice and other useful websites

Keep a record of sites you find useful: