Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Thyroid Cancer Treatment Plan at MSK

This resource explains your thyroid cancer treatment plan at MSK.

About thyroid cancer treatment

Treatment for thyroid cancer is based on many factors related to your tumor. Your healthcare provider will talk with you about a treatment plan that is right for you. They will give you more information about your treatments.

Throughout your treatment, your care team may include a surgeon, a nuclear medicine doctor, and an endocrinologist. An endocrinologist is a doctor who treats diseases that have to do with hormones.

Your care team will talk with you about:

- How often you'll come for visits.
- What tests you'll have.
- Who will provide your care.

These things depend on your specific treatment plan and will change over time.

Initial treatment

Usually, the initial treatment is surgery to remove your tumor. After surgery, you may also have radioactive iodine therapy.

Early follow-up care

After your initial treatment, you will continue to see your surgeon, endocrinologist, and nuclear medicine doctor. Over time, you will probably only need to see 1 of these specialists. You and your healthcare provider will decide when that time is right for you.

Ongoing follow-up care

After the early follow-up period, you may be eligible to join the Thyroid Cancer Survivorship Program. In this survivorship program, you'll get support as you recover from the physical and emotional effects of thyroid cancer and its treatments. Your healthcare provider will help you decide when you're ready for this step.

A survivorship physician assistant (PA) or nurse practitioner (NP) will be responsible for your care in the survivorship program. PAs and NPs are members of your healthcare team.

You'll see your survivorship PA or NP for your follow-up visits. These visits will include:

- Information for managing your thyroid medicine.
- Screening for treatment side effects.
- Tests to make sure your cancer hasn't come back.

Your survivorship PA or NP will recommend other cancer screenings as needed. They'll also talk with you about ways to prevent new health problems.

Transition to your local healthcare provider

After time, your follow-up care may be transferred to an endocrinologist in your community, or your local healthcare provider. We can help you find an endocrinologist if you don't already have one.

We'll send them a detailed summary of your care at MSK, and copies of your test results. This report will also include our recommendations for future care based on the treatment you received. This often happens about 2 years after referral to survivorship program. The timing will depend on your particular thyroid cancer and your response to treatment.

Your MSK healthcare provider or survivorship PA or NP will still be available to you and your local healthcare provider. Talk to them if you have any questions about your care, or if you develop a new thyroid problem.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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