Thyroid Cancer - After Treatment

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After Treatment

After treatment for thyroid cancer ends, talk with your doctor about developing a follow-up care plan. This plan may include physical examinations and/or medical tests on a regular basis to monitor your recovery in the coming months and years. People treated for thyroid cancer are encouraged to receive routine follow-up care over the course of their lifetimes. ASCO offers cancer treatment summary forms [2] to help keep track of the cancer treatment you received and develop a survivorship care plan once treatment is completed

People treated for thyroid cancer are typically asked to return to the doctor's office every six months to a year. At a follow-up care visit, the doctor will conduct a physical examination and blood tests to watch the level of TSH suppression and to test for Tg (see Diagnosis [3]). If the thyroid gland has been removed, there should be little or no Tg in the blood; an elevated level may indicate the cancer has returned. Other blood tests may be done depending on the specific type of thyroid cancer treated. Blood tests also help the doctor determine the correct dosage of the patient's thyroid replacement medication (if needed), which may be adjusted over time as the patient gets older.

Other follow-up tests may include a chest x-ray, an ultrasound of the neck, a full-body scan, or other imaging tests. If the doctor recommends a procedure that uses radioactive iodine (I-131), patients may have to stop taking their thyroid medication up to six weeks and/or may be asked to follow a low-iodine diet for up to two weeks before having the test.

Based on the type of treatment received, the doctor will determine what examinations and tests are needed to check for long-term side effects, including the possibility of secondary cancers. This is particularly important for people who have received I-131 treatment, who may be at higher risk of leukemia and urinary bladder cancer. And, young women who are treated for papillary or follicular thyroid cancer have a higher risk of developing breast cancer in the future and should talk with their doctor about appropriate breast cancer screening recommendations.

People recovering from thyroid cancer are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health, such as maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, eating a balanced diet, and having recommended cancer screening tests. Talk with your doctor to develop a plan that is best for your needs.

Moderate exercise can help you rebuild your strength and energy level. Talk with your doctor about helping you create an appropriate exercise plan based upon your needs, physical abilities, and fitness level. Learn more about the next steps to take in survivorship [4], including making positive lifestyle changes [5].

Find out more about common terms used after cancer treatment is complete [6].

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/node/25394
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/19298
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/25400
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/24583
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/25380