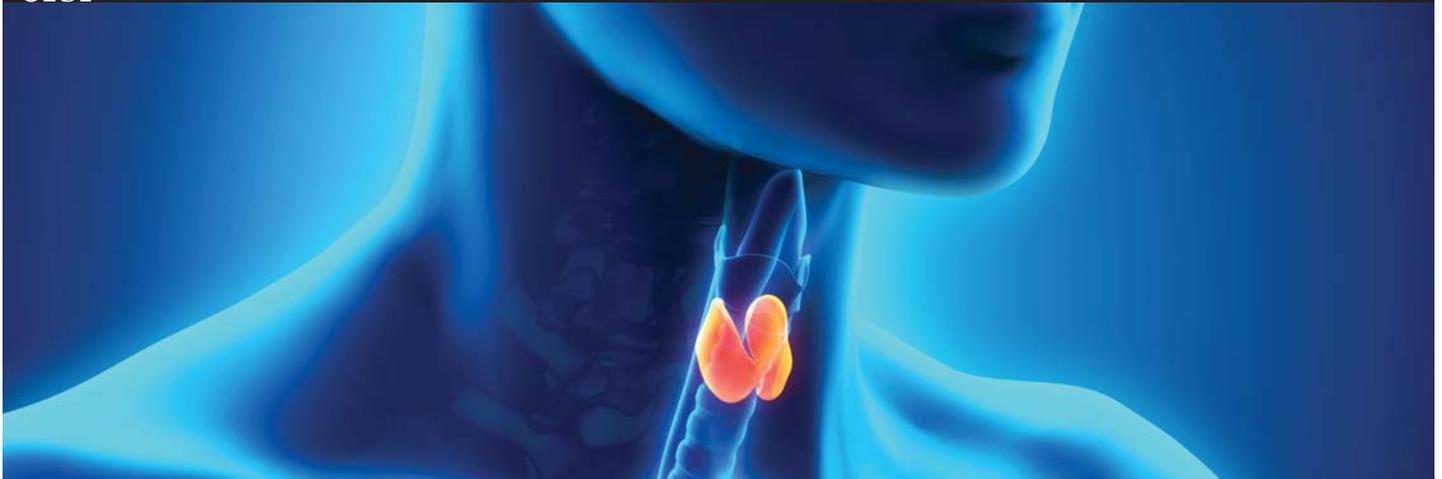


health awareness



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THYROID AWARENESS MONTH

January is Thyroid Awareness Month. Did you know an estimated 15 million Americans have thyroid problems and don't even know it? Thyroid disease affects an estimated 30 million people in the U.S.

What is the Thyroid?

It may be a small, seemingly insignificant gland located below the Adam's apple in the neck, but the thyroid's role in the human body is important. This butterfly-shaped gland is responsible for organ function, including the heart, brain, liver, kidneys and skin. The thyroid gland produces hormones that help the body regulate metabolism. Thyroid issues can lead to depression, weight gain/loss, hand and finger tremors, muscle weakness and fatigue.

Thyroid Conditions

Hypothyroidism is the result of an under-producing thyroid gland. The body slows down when it isn't getting enough of the thyroid hormone. Symptoms include sensitivity to cold, fatigue, dry skin, nails and hair, depression, drowsiness, weight gain and constipation. Because the symptoms are variable, the best way to diagnose is with a blood test for TSH (thyroid-stimulating hormone).

The opposite condition, hyperthyroidism, occurs when the thyroid over-produces hormones, causing the body's processes to accelerate. Symptoms include nervousness, anxiety, rapid heartbeat, body tremors, excessive sweating, weight loss and issues with sleep.

In 1912, a Japanese surgeon

named Hashimoto discovered the most common thyroid condition in the U.S., Hashimoto's Thyroiditis, which affects about 14 million Americans. It is an inherited autoimmune disorder, which causes immune cells to attack healthy thyroid tissue, inflaming the thyroid gland. The result is hypothyroidism. In some cases, the thyroid becomes so inflamed that a goiter, or an abnormally large thyroid gland, develops. To diagnose Hashimoto's, your medical provider will need to conduct a physical exam and administer a TSH blood test.

Graves' disease is another autoimmune thyroid disorder. This disorder causes hyperthyroidism (overproduction of thyroid hormones). Symptoms may include goiter, change in menstrual cycles, erectile dysfunction or decreased libido,

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bulging eyes, thick, red skin on shins or tops of feet, and rapid or irregular heartbeat.

Thyroid Nodules

Thyroid nodules, or lumps in or on the thyroid gland, are common, occurring in about six percent of women and one to two percent of men. Most thyroid nodules are benign (not cancerous). Nodules are caused by an overgrowth of healthy thyroid tissue, fluid-filled cysts, thyroiditis inflammation, or a benign or cancerous tumor. To diagnose a thyroid nodule, a thyroid scan, needle biopsy or ultrasonography, will need to be completed. If your endocrinologist determines that the suggestion of cancer is present, surgical treatment is the next step.

Thyroid Cancer

Thyroid cancer appears as a painless lump in or on your thyroid gland. There are four types of thyroid cancer: papillary, follicular, medullary and anaplastic.

Seventy to 80 percent of cases are papillary cancers. This type of cancer is most common in women and often spreads to cervical (neck) lymph nodes.

Follicular is another type of thyroid cancer which accounts for 10 to 15 percent of thyroid cancer cases. Follicular thyroid cancer typically does not spread. Both papillary and follicular cancers are not inherited.

Papillary and follicular tumor growth is slow and is typically limited to the neck area. Both cancers respond well to

BENEFITS CORNER

CHP Insurance ID Cards

Happy New Year! As a reminder, you will only receive a new ID card if you made a benefit plan change during the 2016 open enrollment period. A system glitch occurred with our ASO (Administrative Services Only) partner, Anthem, which resulted in a delay of the 2016 ID cards. If you need to receive medical, prescription or dental services and are waiting on a hard copy of your ID card, please contact your entity contact or CHP to request a PDF of your ID card that may be used until the hard copy has been received.



treatment, and the survival rate is high.

Medullary cancer accounts for 5% of all thyroid cancers and can be inherited. If medullar cancer is present in your family, a genetic test can be administered to determine whether you have inherited this disease.

Anaplastic thyroid cancer is the least common type of thyroid cancer. It is aggressive and treatment is rarely effective.

Thyroid Neck Check

You will need a handheld mirror and a glass of water.

1. Hold the mirror in your hand, looking at the area above the collarbone and below the voice box (larynx). Don't mistake the Adam's apple for the thyroid gland. The thyroid is further down your neck, closer to your collarbone.

2. While focusing on this area in the mirror, tip your head

back, take a drink of water and swallow.

3. As you swallow, look at your neck, checking for any static or moving bumps in this area.

4. If you notice a bump or bulge, make an appointment to see a medical provider. The bump might be an enlarged thyroid gland or a thyroid nodule that needs further evaluation.

Summary

Thyroid disease is tricky because so many of the symptoms are non-specific (fatigue, depression, weight fluctuation, etc.). Be aware of any bumps or bulges in your thyroid gland, and visit a medical professional if you notice any changes. It is important for you and your family to stay committed to routine physicals, during which your doctor will examine your thyroid gland. A routine physical lab test will also test thyroid levels in the blood.