

Thyroid disease: assessment and management

Information for the public

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Thyroid disease: the care you should expect

Thyroid disease affects a small gland in the neck called the thyroid gland. An 'overactive' thyroid makes too much thyroid hormone. An 'underactive' thyroid does not make enough. The thyroid can also become swollen or enlarged. This is known as a 'goitre'.

Thyroid conditions are very common. They cause many different symptoms and can be hard to diagnose. Most thyroid conditions improve with treatment, but more than one treatment might be suitable depending on the cause of the problem.

We want this guideline to make a difference to people with thyroid disease by making sure:

- they have information about thyroid disease, including causes and possible treatments
- they are offered the right tests, treatment and follow-up for their particular condition
- when there is more than one suitable treatment, they get the information and support they need to make decisions about the different options
- they have information about any thyroid medication they are taking.

Making decisions together

Decisions about treatment and care are best when they are made together. Your doctor should give you clear information about the benefits and risks of treatments, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What are the benefits and risks of each treatment – do some of the risks worry you more than others?
- How well is each treatment likely to work and what might the effects be?
- What happens if you don't want to have treatment?

You may need to discuss different treatment options depending on the cause of your thyroid problems. For example, if you have an overactive thyroid you might be offered a course of antithyroid drugs, radioactive iodine (which causes the thyroid gland to shrink) or surgery to remove the gland. One or more of these treatments could be suitable depending on your situation.

If you can't understand the information you are given, tell your doctor.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

Where can I find out more?

The [NHS website](#) has more information about thyroid disease, including:

- [Overactive thyroid](#)
- [Underactive thyroid](#)
- [Goitre](#)

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [British Thyroid Foundation](#), 01423 810093
- [The Thyroid Trust](#), 020 3983 0877

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by thyroid disease and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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