

Thyroid Cancer Diagnoses and Deaths Predicted To Increase Slightly in 2020

Thyroid cancer diagnoses are predicted to increase slightly to 52,890 in 2020, compared to 52,070 in 2019, reports the nonprofit ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc. (www.thyca.org) based on information from the American Cancer Society and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Deaths from thyroid cancer are expected to increase slightly to 2,180 in 2020, from 2,170 in 2019, 2,060 in 2018, and 2,010 in 2017.

Thyroid cancer affects people of all ages, from young children to seniors. About half of people diagnosed are under age 50. About three-quarters are female.

“We are pleased about the recent leveling off of deaths, and hope that this will continue instead of the steady increases of the last few years. Even more, we hope that the death rate will significantly drop, as it has for so many other cancers,” said ThyCa Executive Director Gary Bloom, a 24-year thyroid cancer survivor.

“Thyroid cancer is usually successfully treated when found early,” he added, “and some small papillary thyroid cancers, the most common type, may be followed by active surveillance rather than needing active treatment. However, any type of thyroid cancer becomes more difficult to treat if it has spread widely, and the rare types such as medullary or anaplastic and aggressive forms of papillary and follicular are difficult to treat. Patients often cannot find thyroid nodules on their own.”

ThyCa urges everyone to learn about thyroid cancer and ask for a neck check via palpation at their routine medical appointments. Signs of a thyroid nodule can include voice changes, difficulty breathing or swallowing, or a bulge on the lower neck. A neck check by a medical professional during a routine appointment takes only a few seconds. It does not need any special equipment. Fortunately, most thyroid nodules are benign, not cancer.

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