

## PATIENT [ACT]IVATION TIPS

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “Know what type of thyroid cancer you have and the characteristics of it, including size and if there are any high-risk features. The reason I recommend this is because there's a lot of information on the web, and sometimes you can be reading about a different type of thyroid cancer than what you have, and that might create a lot of worry and anxiety. I think the more you know that's specific to your type of thyroid cancer, the more helpful it is for you.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “Make sure you know if your surgeon is a high or low volume thyroid surgeon. Ask them, ‘How many thyroid operations have you done within the past year?’ High volume surgeons typically do 25 or more. That's really important because you're going to have a lower risk of complications.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “If you were referred to your local surgeon, I think it's appropriate to ask them, ‘How many thyroid surgeries have you done in the past year? What are some of the complications that might happen? How often do you see that in your patient setting?’ These are all very appropriate questions to ask.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “If you feel like you're being dismissed, if you're anxious, worried, stressed, feel like your questions aren't being answered, you can always get a second opinion or see someone else.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “If you feel like you're not getting the answers or the support from your physician, there are other online resources that are available that can also help with worry and stress related to a cancer diagnosis.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “You want to make sure you see high volume and experienced specialists. Ask your endocrinologist, ‘What proportion of your patient population are thyroid cancer patients? How comfortable are you following thyroid cancer patients long-term?’ You may get varying answers. I think it's important just to ask these questions so that you feel comfortable that you have experienced providers taking care of you.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “If you have high-risk advanced disease that's progressing, I think it's very important to ask your physician if they've done tumor sequencing to see if there's any actionable mutations, because then you could have more targeted treatment. Some of these targeted treatments work better and have lower side effects. It's really an era of more tailored care.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “Outcomes are better when individuals see high volume physicians. There's strong data for thyroid cancer and other cancers as well, that sometimes what's happening is individuals who are lower socioeconomic status or a minority race or ethnicity are clustering at low volume hospitals, so they may not be getting the best care because of where they're going. It's very important to advocate for yourself and don't be afraid to look around. If the center that's closest to you isn't the best center for thyroid cancer, and if there's a better one that's further away, and you're capable of getting there, I would encourage you to go.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “Patients should carefully ask the risks and benefits of each of the treatment options, so they can make a pro/con list for themselves and really tailor it to what's a priority to them.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

**[ACT]IVATION TIP:** “If you have advanced thyroid cancer, if you have disease that's progressing, it's not treated with standard therapy. If you've seen an endocrinologist and maybe they don't routinely give targeted treatments, make sure you're referred to an appropriate person who does. There may already be an available drug or a clinical trial that's targeted towards your specific tumor mutation.” - Dr. Megan Haymart

## THYROID CANCER FACTS

- 70-75% of all thyroid cancer cases occur in women.
- Thyroid cancer is the most common cancer in individuals aged 15-33.
- The median age of thyroid cancer patients is about 50.

[Source]

## RESOURCES

- [Patient Empowerment Network](#)
- [American Cancer Society](#)
- [American Thyroid Association](#)
- [CancerCare](#)
- [Light of Life Foundation](#)
- [ThyCa: Thyroid Cancer Survivors' Association, Inc.](#)
- [Thyroid, Head and Neck Cancer \(THANC\) Foundation](#)
- [National Cancer Institute](#)
- [National Comprehensive Cancer Network \(NCCN\) Guidelines for Patients](#)

## THYROID CANCER TREATMENT

- The first step in treatment for all types of thyroid cancer is usually surgery. Depending on the type of cancer, your surgeon may remove only the lobe involved with the cancer, called a lobectomy, or remove the entire thyroid, called a total thyroidectomy. Be sure to talk to your surgeon about the risks and benefits of both.
- If you are a high-risk patient with advanced disease, make sure that after the tumor is removed that it is looked at by a pathologist for genetic sequencing.
- Radioactive iodine therapy or I-131 therapy may be recommended after surgery.
- Thyroid hormone therapy may also be an option.

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## THYROID CANCER CHECKLIST

- 1. **Activate in Your Initial Appointment.** Discuss diagnosis, stage, treatment options.
- 2. **Establish Your Treatment Team.** Choose a surgeon that does a high volume (25+ per year) of surgeries and an endocrinologist who routinely treats and follows thyroid cancer patients.
- 3. **Maintain Open Communication:** Discuss fears and concerns openly. Do not hesitate to seek 2nd or 3rd opinions.
- 4. **Research Financial Support.** Explore financial assistance options as well as other community financial support options.
- 5. **Seek Emotional Support.** Talk openly with loved ones, consider talk therapy, and connect with relevant support groups.
- 6. **Strive for a Healthy Lifestyle.** Maintain a balanced diet, moderate exercise, and stress management.
- 7. **Stay Informed.** Learn about thyroid cancer through trusted resources, ask questions, and remain updated on advancements.