

Expert Panel Advises Against Routine Thyroid Cancer Screening

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Screening for cancer might seem like an obvious way to save lives. But when it comes to thyroid cancer, not getting screened might actually be better for your health, that is, if you have no symptoms of the illness, according to new guidelines by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (UPSTF). The federal oversight group recently published a warning in the Journal of the American Medical Association for doctors to stop testing asymptomatic patients for the condition, [NPR reports](#).

Thyroid cancer occurs when small tumors grow on the thyroid, a small hormone-producing organ located in the front of the throat. But experts on the condition stressed that nearly one third of individuals diagnosed with these growths experience no negative consequences from them. In fact, thyroid screening almost always detects cancers that would never grow into life-threatening tumors. In addition, such screening could lead to unnecessary surgeries to treat the condition.

Thyroid removal surgery (a common treatment for thyroid cancer) can also have significant side effects. Surgeons can sever the nerves that help control speech and swallowing or remove the parathyroid gland, which regulates calcium throughout the body. What's more, patients who undergo surgery are required to take thyroid hormone for the rest of their lives.

"The harms outweigh the benefits," said Seth Landefeld, MD, a task force member and chairman of the department of medicine at the University of Alabama, Birmingham. "We would recommend against screening for thyroid cancer in adults who have no symptoms," he added.

UPSTF also noted that thyroid cancer is generally quite treatable and that most people survive the disease. Additionally, the rarer forms of the illness aren't typically detected when doctors screen healthy people.

People should nonetheless get screened for thyroid cancer if they experience symptoms such as swelling in the neck, voice changes, problems swallowing or neck pain.

[Click here](#) to learn more about thyroid cancer and its treatments.
