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# Web Exclusive: Types of Thyroid Cancer

BY THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

Your thyroid is a gland at the front of your neck beneath your voice box (larynx). A healthy thyroid is a little larger than a quarter. It usually cannot be felt through the skin.

### **There are several types of thyroid cancer:**

**Papillary thyroid cancer:** In the United States, this type makes up about 80 percent of all thyroid cancers. It begins in follicular cells and grows slowly. If diagnosed early, most people with papillary thyroid cancer can be cured.

**Follicular thyroid cancer:** This type makes up about 15 percent of all thyroid cancers. It begins in follicular cells and grows slowly. If diagnosed early, most people with follicular thyroid cancer can be treated successfully.

**Medullary thyroid cancer:** This type makes up about 3 percent of all thyroid cancers. It begins in the C cells of the thyroid. Cancer that starts in the C cells can make abnormally high levels of calcitonin. Medullary thyroid cancer tends to grow slowly. It can be easier to control if it's found and treated before it spreads to other parts of the body.

**Anaplastic thyroid cancer:** This type makes up about 2 percent of all thyroid cancers. It begins in the follicular cells of the thyroid. The cancer cells tend to grow and spread very quickly. Anaplastic thyroid cancer is very hard to control.