

PARISH NURSE'S NOTES – JANUARY 2021

<https://nationaltoday.com/thyroid-awareness-month>

The thyroid is a small gland responsible for producing hormones that play a crucial role in many of the body's systems — from cells and tissues, to organs like the heart, brain, liver, and kidneys. Dysfunction occurs when the thyroid produces either too much or too little thyroid hormone. Either can disrupt healthy functioning of vital organs — leading to a wide range of symptoms. The good news? Once diagnosed and treated, it's entirely possible to live a normal, healthy

1. Take the thyroid neck check

Have a hand-held mirror and a glass of water handy. With the mirror in your hand, focus on the lower front area of your neck, above the collarbone, and below the voice box (larynx). This is where your thyroid gland is located. While focusing on this area, tip your head back, take a drink of water, and swallow. As you swallow, look at your neck. Check for any bulges or protrusions. (Don't confuse the Adam's apple with the thyroid gland.) If you do see any bulges, see your physician. You may have an enlarged thyroid gland or a thyroid nodule.

2. Encourage friends and family to get tested

If a family member or a friend has mentioned feeling cold a lot of the time, having trouble sleeping, or difficulty swallowing, maybe it's time to suggest they ask their doctor about thyroid dysfunction. It's all too easy to dismiss "little" issues like dry skin as being insignificant, but testing could help them find treatment quicker.

5 REASONS TO CHECK YOUR THYROID

1. It's a small gland with a major impact

The thyroid is a small, butterfly-shaped gland at base of the neck that produces thyroid hormones; these influence how all other cells, tissues, and organs function.

2. Thyroid dysfunction can have hundreds of possible symptoms

Symptoms vary widely and diagnosis can be difficult, so keeping detailed records will be a significant help to your doctor.

3. It affects millions in the U.S. alone

It's estimated that over 30 million Americans have thyroid dysfunction, yet at least half of these cases are undiagnosed and, consequently, untreated.

4. Anyone can be affected by thyroid dysfunction

Although women are five times more likely to develop thyroid problems than men, it can happen to anyone.

5. Diagnosis is the key

Good news: With a proper diagnosis, thyroid dysfunction can be successfully treated so you can enjoy a healthy lifestyle.