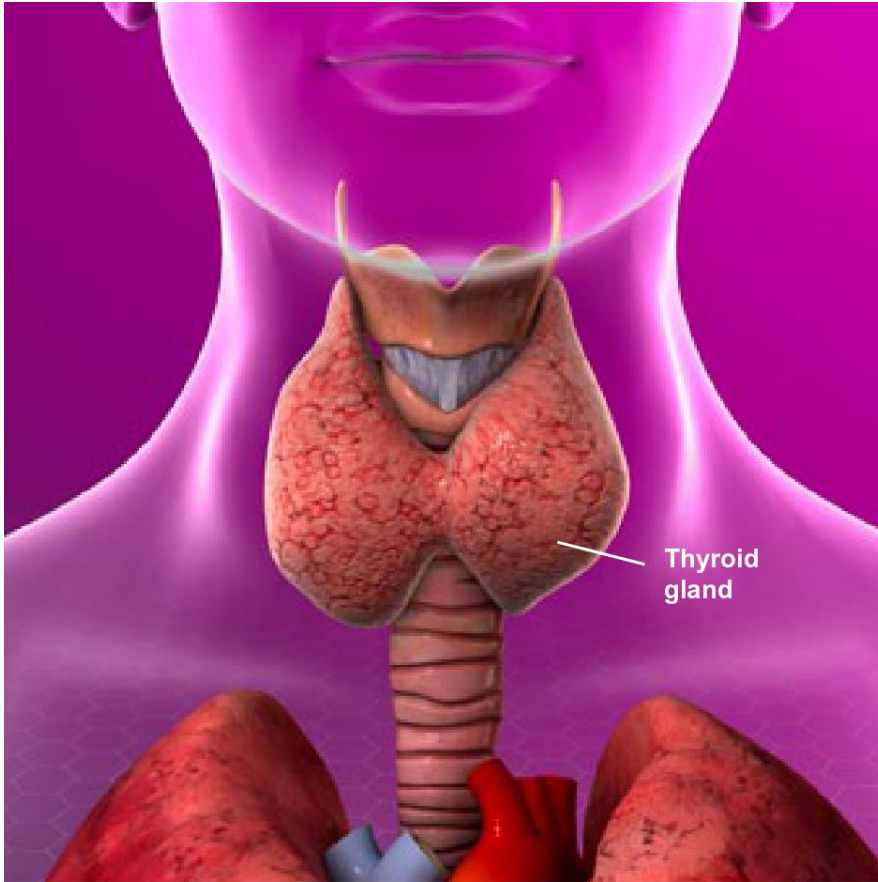




Goiter



Overview

This condition is a swelling of the thyroid gland, a gland in the neck that produces hormones to regulate metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature. Goiters occur most commonly in women over the age of 40. A goiter is not the same as thyroid cancer.

Causes

Goiters may be caused by a variety of problems. In undeveloped countries, lack of iodine in the diet is the main cause. But the consumption of iodized salt has largely eliminated this issue in developed countries. Other causes include a genetic predisposition, a reaction to certain drugs, pregnancy, exposure to radiation, and certain diseases.

Symptoms

Symptoms may include a visible swelling in the neck, a tight feeling in the throat, coughing, hoarseness, and difficulty swallowing or breathing. The goiter may feel tender to the touch.

Treatment

Treatment options may vary depending on the size and cause of the goiter. A small goiter that is not causing problems may require no treatment. Large or problematic goiters may be treated with medications, radioactive iodine to destroy thyroid cells, and surgery to remove part or all of the thyroid.