



Students at HALB are getting ready for Sukkos! In art class, they made beautiful decorations to hang in their sukkahs at home



Sukkos is in the air at HANC EC! The yeladim were so busy creating their magnificent projects for Sukkos and Simchas Torah to share with their families



September is Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month

According to the *American Cancer Society* approximately 45,240 new cases of thyroid cancer will be diagnosed this year with approximately 2,320 deaths from thyroid cancer. This type of cancer is almost three times more common in women than in men and is often diagnosed at a younger age than most other adult cancers. The average age when a person is diagnosed with thyroid cancer is 51.

In recognition of Thyroid Cancer Awareness Month, Dr. Sheldon Genack, Chair of the Department of Surgery at Episcopal Health Services, discusses the signs, risk factors and advances in treatment that are helping thyroid cancer patients achieve positive outcomes.

What is Thyroid Cancer

Thyroid cancer develops in the thyroid gland, a small butterfly-shaped gland located in the neck that plays a vital role in regulating metabolism and hormone function. According to Dr. Genack, many cases of thyroid cancer are discovered incidentally during imaging tests per-

formed for unrelated conditions, often before symptoms even develop. One of the most common warning signs patients should be aware of is the appearance of a lump or swelling in the neck. While not every lump is cancerous, any new swelling or mass should be evaluated by a physician. A family history of thyroid cancer and prior radiation exposure may also increase an individual's risk of developing the disease.

How Thyroid Nodules Are Evaluated

Ultrasound is considered the most effective tool for evaluating thyroid nodules because it provides detailed imaging without exposing patients to radiation. During an ultrasound, physicians assess the size, shape and appearance of the nodule to determine whether it has suspicious characteristics that may require further testing. Characteristics such as irregular borders or calcifications may prompt a recommendation for a needle biopsy also known as a fine needle aspiration (FNA).

Advances in thyroid cancer care have also helped reduce the number of unnecessary surgeries. In the past, suspicious thyroid nodules often led to the removal of part or all of the thyroid gland. Today, molecular and genetic testing can provide additional insight into whether a nodule is likely to be cancerous. These advanced diagnostic tools allow physicians to more accurately determine which patients truly require surgery and those who can safely avoid more invasive treatment.

Thyroid Cancer Treatment Has Evolved

Dr. Genack explains that one of the significant advances in thyroid cancer care has been a shift toward "less is more" treatment approaches. Since many thyroid cancers grow slowly and behave less aggressively than other cancers, some patients may only require removal of part of the thyroid gland rather than the entire gland. In certain cases involving very small thyroid cancers, patients may even be monitored closely with routine ultrasounds instead of undergoing immediate surgery.

Thyroid cancer is highly treatable, especially when detected early. Dr. Genack notes that cure rates for many well-differentiated thyroid cancers are exceptionally high, often exceeding 90%. He emphasizes that while a cancer diagnosis can understandably feel overwhelming, thyroid cancer is generally not considered an aggressive cancer, and many patients go on to live healthy lives following treatment.

Staying Aware of Your Thyroid Health

Routine physical examinations and close attention to changes in the neck can play an important role in the early detection of thyroid cancer. Dr. Genack also notes that thyroid bloodwork alone cannot determine whether thyroid cancer is



Dr. Sheldon Genack

present. When thyroid nodules are identified, imaging studies and biopsy procedures remain the most effective tools for evaluation and diagnosis

As awareness surrounding GLP-1 medications continues to grow, some patients may have questions about their potential connection to thyroid cancer. Dr. Genack explains that while studies in rodents raises concerns about a rare type of thyroid cancer known as medullary thyroid carcinoma, this risk has not been strongly demonstrated in humans. However, patients with a family history of medullary thyroid cancer, or those who develop a new lump in the neck while taking GLP-1 medications, should discuss their concerns with a physician.

Comprehensive Thyroid Care at EHS

At EHS, patients have access to advanced diagnostic imaging, specialized ENT/Otolaryngology care and personalized treatment plans for thyroid conditions and thyroid cancer. Early detection and ongoing follow-up care can make a significant difference in improving outcomes and providing patients with greater peace of mind. If you notice a lump or swelling in your neck or have concerns about your thyroid health, call 718-EHS-DOCS (347-3627) to schedule an evaluation.



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