

Thyroid Nodules (Neck 8.1)

- Ultrasound (US) plays a key role in determining which nodules display characteristics suspicious for malignancy and warrant biopsy. Of palpable thyroid nodules, the American College of Radiology (ACR) states, "US provides high-resolution imaging to show that the palpable abnormality is within the thyroid and is the best study to characterize the nodule for the risk of malignancy"². US is also the best study to demonstrate goiter size and evaluate thyroid morphology.²
- Nuclear imaging with a radionuclide uptake and scan also plays an important role in thyroid imaging. In the setting of a suppressed thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) level, nuclear imaging helps to determine whether the patient has thyrotoxicosis.
- A thyroid nuclear scan, in conjunction with thyroid ultrasound, is also useful in the setting of a multinodular goiter and a normal TSH to identify hypofunctioning or isofunctioning nodules which should be targeted for biopsy.
- Neck CT is useful in determining the extent of a substernal goiter, evaluating whether a goiter is causing tracheal compression or deviation, assessing the extent of invasive thyroid cancer, or for preoperative imaging. It does not have a role in distinguishing benign from malignant thyroid nodules.
- Neck CT is preferred to neck MRI, as there is less respiratory motion artifact.
- FDG-PET/CT does not have a role in the initial imaging of a thyroid nodule.²

References:

1. Haugen BR, Alexander EK, Bible KC, et al. 2015 American Thyroid Association Management Guidelines for adult patients with thyroid nodules and differentiated thyroid cancer: The American Thyroid Association Guidelines Task Force on Thyroid Nodules and Differentiated Thyroid Cancer. *Thyroid*. 2016 Jan;26(1):1-133.
2. Hoang JK, Oldan JD, Mandel SJ, et al. ACR Appropriateness Criteria® Thyroid Disease. *Journal of the American College of Radiology*. 2019;16(5). doi:10.1016/j.jacr.2019.02.004