



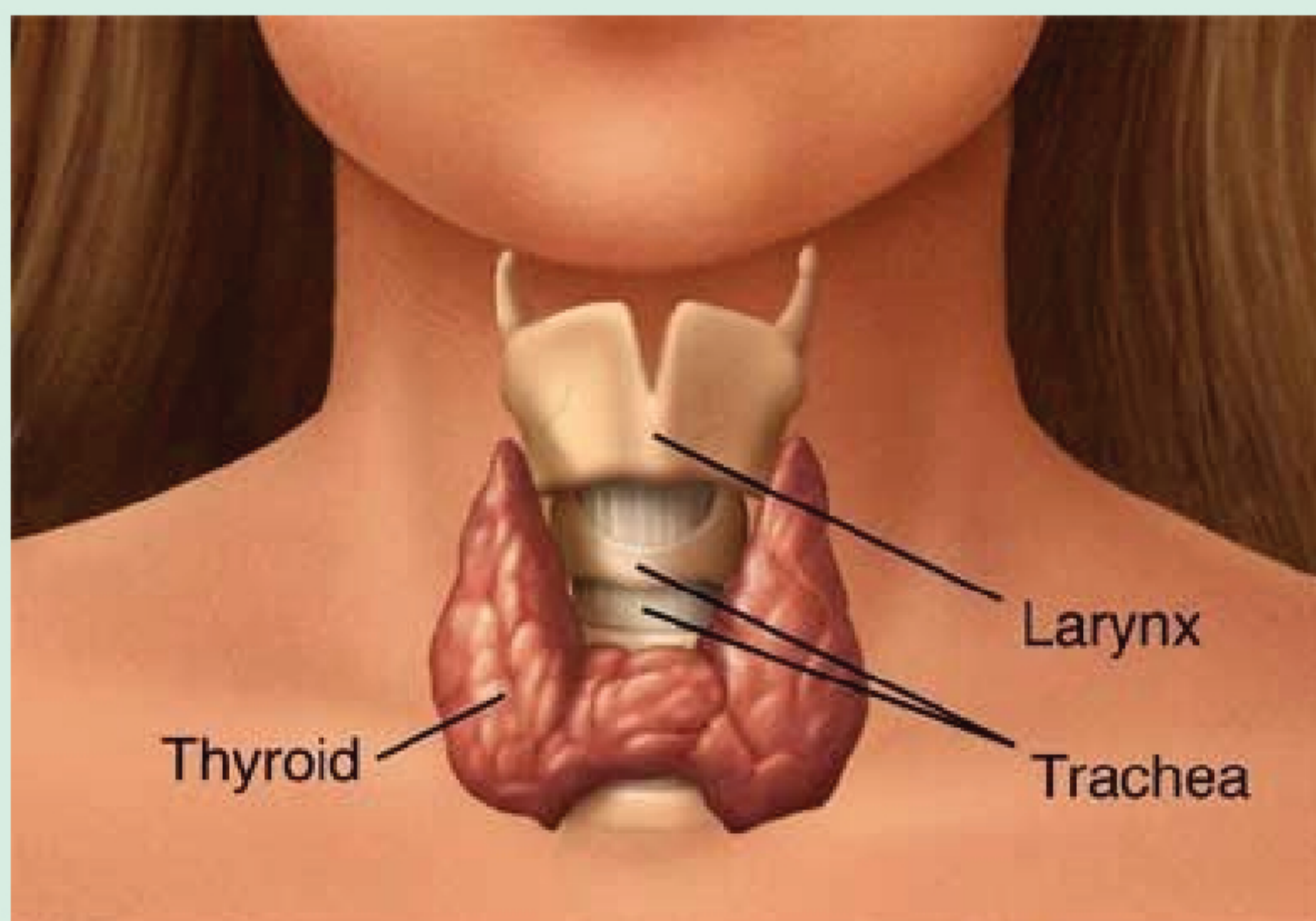
THYROID

EYE DISEASE



What is the thyroid gland?

The thyroid gland is a small butterfly-shaped gland sitting near the top of your windpipe (trachea) at the front of your neck. The thyroid gland can become overactive or underactive. This is most often due to an autoimmune disease.



What is thyroid eye disease?

Thyroid eye disease (TED) is a disease marked by swelling of the muscles and fatty tissues surrounding the eyeball within the eye socket. TED is sometimes called other names such as thyroid ophthalmopathy, dysthyroid eye disease, Graves's ophthalmopathy or ophthalmic Graves' disease.

The swelling of the muscles and soft tissue pushes the eyeball forward, causes double vision and in severe cases loss of vision due to compression of the nerve connecting the eye to the brain. When the eye is pushed forward the clear window in the front part of the eye (the cornea) loses its protection, which is provided by the eyelids.

Who gets thyroid eye disease?

It is a rare condition, affecting women more than men. Most of these people have a problem with an overactive thyroid gland and have an underlying autoimmune condition. It can also occur in people with normal thyroid hormone levels or even less. It generally occurs in middle age. It is also more likely to develop if you are a smoker.

How is thyroid eye disease diagnosed?

If you are already diagnosed of a thyroid disorder, thyroid eye disease can be simply diagnosed by an eye examination.

1. Blood Tests

Thyroid tests are done to know the status of the thyroid gland.

2. Scans

ACT scan/MRI of the eye are done to know the status of the eye muscles and also the effect of the swelling on the nerve of the eye.

3. Other Tests

In some cases, other tests like visual fields are done to know the extent of the eye nerve compression due to the swelling.

Are there any complications from thyroid eye disease?

- Damage to the clear window of the eye (the cornea).
- Damage to the nerve of the eye, resulting in poor vision or colour appreciation.
- Permanent squint or double vision.
- Unsightly appearance.

What are the symptoms of thyroid eye disease?

- Symptoms are caused by the tissues of the eye socket swelling and pushing the eyeball forward.
- The front of your eyes can get red and irritated as the sensitive cornea is less well covered or lubricated by the eyelids. In severe cases it can lead to damage to the cornea, causing loss of vision.
- The front of your eyes may feel (and be) dry if the tear producing gland (the lacrimal gland) has been affected.
- Your eyes may ache.
- Your eyes may look more bulgy, giving you a staring appearance.
- You may get double vision (diplopia) as the muscles become too swollen to work properly.
- In advanced disease, your vision may become blurred and colours can appear less vivid.
- The two eyeballs are not always equally affected. You may have other non-eye symptoms due to the abnormal thyroid gland.



What is the treatment for thyroid eye disease?

The treatment depends on the stage of the disease in the eye.

Medicines

In the early phase of the disease and where the disease stays mild, artificial tears (ocular lubricants) may be enough. If you have very severe disease and the doctors are concerned about your sight, you may need much stronger dose of steroids. As the disease progresses, you may need immunosuppressive drugs - a family of medicines that dampens down the immune system which is producing these abnormal antibodies. They may give you modified glasses that block off vision from one eye (like a patch) or put a special cover, called a prism, over one side to stop the diplopia.

Surgical treatment

- Immediate surgery may be required in severe cases with compression of eye nerve.
- Once the eye disease has reached the quiet stage surgery can be done to make the eye look more normal.
- Orbital decompression is done to make the eye less prominent.
- Surgical correction of the eyelid position can also be done to improve the appearance.
- Squint or double vision can be corrected surgically once the eye is quiet.

Other types of treatment

If you develop double vision (diplopia), you may be referred to a specialist health professional who manages problems with eye muscles.

Is there anything I can do?

Yes. Here are a few tips:

- Stop smoking
- Sleeping propped up will help reduce the puffiness (congestion) around the eyes.
- You may find bright light uncomfortable. Sunglasses will help.

Occuloplasty

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