

Thyroid examination

Make sure that the neck is appropriately exposed. Undo the top 1-2 buttons.

General inspection

- Comment on obesity or weight loss
- Exophthalmos
- Dry skin in hypothyroidism
- Hair

Examination of the hands

- Check pulse
- Check for presence of sweating and increase in temperature
- Onycholysis (separation of the nail from its bed)
- Thyroid acropathy (similar to clubbing)
- Ask the patient to extend his/her arms and hold hands with palms facing down wards. Look for any tremor

Examination of the thyroid gland

Inspection

- Ask the patient to swallow, only a goitre or a thyroglossal cyst will rise on swallowing
- Note any asymmetry or scars of previous surgery

Palpation

- Stand behind the patient with thumbs on the back of the neck and patient's head slightly flexed
- Gently palpate the neck looking for any abnormality
- Have the patient swallow and feel the gland move under your fingers
- Palpation of right lobe: ask the patient to turn neck slightly to the right, palpate again with patient swallowing. If thyroid is palpable describe size (feel for the lower border to rule out retrosternal extension), shape (uniformly enlarged or nodular), consistency (soft, rubbery or hard), tenderness (thyroiditis) and mobility (neoplasm: fixed).
- Repeat the same for the left lobe.
- Palpate lymph nodes.

Auscultation

- Bruit is a sign of increased blood flow and can be present in thyrotoxicosis.

Examination of the eyes

- Look for lid lag, lid retraction, exophthalmos (examine from behind and above. The eyes should not be visible beyond the supraorbital ridge)
- Check eye movements by asking the patient to follow your finger movements without moving their head.

- Check reflexes (slow relaxing in hypothyroidism)
- Proximal myopathy and
- Pretibial myxoedema

Cardiovascular examination

- Signs of cardiac failure

Thyroid function tests

- TSH: 0.5-5.0 mU/l
- T3: 1.1-2.8 nmol/l
- T4: 50-150 nmol/l

History

- Altered bowel habits
- Increased appetite
- Oligomenorrhoea
- Irritability/mood swings
- Dislike of hot weather

