

## THE MOST COMMON SYSTEM USED TO DESCRIBE THE STAGES OF CANCERS IS THE AMERICAN JOINT COMMITTEE ON CANCER (AJCC) TNM SYSTEM. THE TNM SYSTEM DESCRIBES 3 KEY PIECES OF INFORMATION:

- **T** indicates the size of the main (primary) tumor and whether it has grown into nearby areas.
- **N** describes the extent of spread to nearby (regional) lymph nodes.
- **M** indicates whether the cancer has metastasized to other organs of the body. (The most common site of spread of thyroid cancer is to the lungs. The next most common sites are the liver and bones.)

### T CATEGORIES FOR THYROID CANCER

**TX:** Primary tumor cannot be assessed

**T0:** No evidence of primary tumor

**T1:** The tumor is  $\leq 2$  cm; T1a  $\leq 1$  cm, T1b  $> 1$  cm but  $\leq 2$  cm

**T2:** Tumor is  $> 2$  cm and  $\leq 4$  cm

**T3\*:** Tumor is  $> 4$  cm; limited to thyroid(T3a)\* or any tumor size with gross extrathyroidal extension to strap muscles(T3b)\*

**T4a:** Tumor of any size and has grown extensively beyond the thyroid gland into soft tissues of the neck, trachea, larynx, esophagus or recurrent laryngeal nerve.

**T4b:** Tumor has grown either into prevertebral fascia or into nearby large blood vessels

### N CATEGORIES FOR THYROID CANCER:

**NX:** Regional lymph nodes cannot be assessed

**N0:** No histological (N0a)\*, or radiological/clinical (N0b)\* spread to nearby lymph nodes

**N1a\*:** Spread to level VI or VII lymph nodes in the neck

**N1b\*:** Spread to unilateral, bilateral or contralateral level I-V lymph nodes or retropharyngeal nodes

### M CATEGORIES FOR THYROID CANCER:

**MX:** Presence of distant metastasis cannot be assessed

**M0:** No distant metastasis

**M1:** Distant metastasis is present, involving distant lymph nodes, internal organs, bones, etc.

## STAGING FOR FOLLICULAR THYROID CANCER (FTC) AND PAPILLARY THYROID CANCER (PTC)

*PATIENTS YOUNGER THAN 55 YEARS:*

**Stage I (any T, any N, M0):** The tumor can be any size and may or may not have spread to nearby lymph nodes. It has not spread to distant sites.

**Stage II (any T, any N, M1):** The tumor can be any size and may or may not have spread to nearby lymph nodes. It has spread to distant sites.

*\*PATIENTS 55 YEARS AND OLDER:*

**Stage I (T1/T2, N0, M0):** The tumor is less than or equal to 4cm across and has not spread to nearby lymph nodes or distant sites.

**Stage II (T1 to T3, N1, M0 or T3, N0, M0):** One of the following applies: The tumor is of any size and has spread to nearby lymph nodes but not to distant sites. Tumor is more than 4 cm limited to thyroid and has not spread to regional lymph nodes or to distant sites. Tumor of any size with gross extrathyroidal extension to strap muscles but not to regional lymph nodes or to distant site.

**Stage III (T4a, N0 to N1, M0):**

The tumor is any size with gross extrathyroidal extension to nearby tissues and may or may not have spread to regional lymph nodes but not to distant sites.

**Stage IVA (T4b, N0 to N1, M0):**

The tumor is any size and has grown either into prevertebral fascia or into nearby large blood vessels. It may or may not have spread to regional lymph nodes. It has not spread to distant sites.

**Stage IVB ((T1 to T4, N0 to N1, M1):**

The tumor is any size and may or may not have grown outside the thyroid. It may or may not have spread to nearby lymph nodes. It has spread to distant sites.