

THYROGLOSSAL DUCT REMNANTS

Alternative names: Spanish: Restos del conducto tirogloso; Portuguese: Remanescentes do ducto tireoglosso

Written by Luis Felipe Zanolli de Solminihac and Johan Fagan

Background Information

Definitions of levels of care (in this guideline)

- Level 1: Community healthcare worker/non-doctor
- Level 2: Medical doctor
- Level 3: ENT Surgeon

Definition

Remnants of the thyroglossal duct, presenting as a cyst, abscess, thyroid tissue and/or thyroid malignancy anywhere between its origin at the foramen caecum of the base of the tongue, and the thyroid gland (Figure 3.2.1). It may rarely be the patient's only thyroid tissue.



Lingual:	2%
Suprahyoid:	24%
Thyrohyoid:	61%
Suprasternal:	13%
Mediastinal:	Rarely

Preferred treatment

- Resection of cyst, abscess, thyroid tissue and/or thyroid malignancy as well as the proximal thyroglossal duct including the central hyoid bone and a core of base of tongue muscle towards the foramen caecum (Sistrunk operation)¹.
- An abscess is aspirated and treated with antibiotics, with a Sistrunk operation delayed until all inflammation has settled.

Signs may include

- Supra - or infrahyoid mass in the central neck.
- Mass moves upwards with protrusion of tongue and swallowing due to its relationship to the hyoid bone.

- May become infected and present as an abscess or a skin sinus.

Examination and investigations

General:

- Cyst, abscess, or mass anywhere between its origin at the foramen caecum of the base of the tongue, and the thyroid gland.
- Mass moves upwards with protrusion of tongue and swallowing due to its relationship to the hyoid bone.

Level 1:

- If infected, aspirate and treat with broad spectrum antibiotic to cover oral cavity microorganisms eg. Amoxicillin Clavulate.
- Refer for surgery once infection settled.

Level 2:

- If infected, aspirate and treat with broad spectrum antibiotic.
- Refer for surgery once infection settled.

Level 3:

- If infected, aspirate and treat with broad spectrum antibiotic.
- Request ultrasound to confirm presence of normal thyroid gland.
- Proceed to Sistrunk operation¹.

Management

General:

- The objective is to resect not only the thyroglossal duct remnant, but also the entire thyroglossal duct tract which includes the central hyoid bone and a core of base of tongue muscle towards the foramen caecum.

Level 1:

- Refer to a hospital that performs Sistrunk operation¹.

Level 2:

- Refer to a hospital that performs Sistrunk operation¹.

Level 3:

- Perform Sistrunk operation¹.

Further reading

1. Fagan, J. Thyroglossal duct remnants. *Open Access Atlas of Otolaryngology, Head and Neck Operative Surgery*

<https://vula.uct.ac.za/access/content/group/ba5fb1bd-be95-48e5-81be-586fbaeba29d/thyroglossal20duct%20remnants-1.pdf>