

Thyroid Cancer in Children Surge in Fukushima Since Nuclear Meltdown

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A Japanese child in the area affected by the Fukushima meltdown has her thyroid check. Photo credit: Fukushima-Diary.com

The impact of the 2011 [Fukushima](#) nuclear reactor meltdown on the region's young people is starting to add up.

104 of the area's 300,000 young people who were under 18 at the time of the disaster have been diagnosed with thyroid cancer, Japanese newspaper *The Asahi Shinbun* [reported](#) yesterday. This form of cancer has been linked to radiation exposure.

But, government officials in Fukushima say they do not believe the cases of thyroid gland cancer diagnosed or suspected in the 104 young people are linked to the 2011 nuclear accident.

It helps their denial that experts disagree on whether these [cases of thyroid cancer](#) can be traced back to the meltdown, which released radiation over a large area. While the slow-developing cancer only appeared in young people four years after the 1986 Chernobyl meltdown in Ukraine, radiation biology professor Yoshio Hosoi told *The Asahi Shinbun* that better tests allow earlier diagnoses.

"Many people are being diagnosed with cancer at this time, thanks to the high-precision tests," he said. "We must continue closely examining the people's health in order to determine the impact of radiation exposure on causing thyroid tumors."

Whatever the government believes at this time, scientists and public health experts are calling for ongoing studies.

The Asahi Shinbun reports:

Hokuto Hoshi, who chairs a panel that discusses matters related to the prefectural survey on the health impact from radiation on Fukushima's residents, said the panel's subcommittee will soon analyze the test results to determine the impact of the accident on the thyroid tumor rate. The prefecture also plans to continue medical checkups on residents in the prefecture and use the test results as a basis for comparison in the future, prefectural officials said.

"The rising number of thyroid cancer cases in Fukushima area children exposed to the

meltdown is disturbing,” says Joseph Mangano MPH MBA, executive director of the [Radiation and Public Health Project](#). “The 104 cases either confirmed or very likely to be confirmed is far greater than the expected number of seven for a population of children that size over a three year period. Thyroid cancer is only one of the many diseases whose risk increases after a meltdown, and researchers must conduct studies, both in Japan and other affected nations.”

The full extent of the risk from exposure to very high levels of radiation exposure is unknown. The high level of [secrecy and denial](#) over those impacts followed both the Chernobyl meltdown and the 1979 Three Mile Island meltdown in Pennsylvania made the true human cost of the disasters hard to map.

“The massive releases of Iodine 131 spewed out by Fukushima guarantee a skyrocketing thyroid cancer rate among the children in the region,” says [Harvey Wasserman](#), editor of [Nukefree.org](#) and author of *SOLARTOPIA!* “A parallel tragedy has been unfolding at Chernobyl for nearly 30 years, and at Three Mile Island since 1979. There is no doubt people—especially children—have been maimed and killed by these releases. But the nuclear industry has been very good at covering them up. Hopefully at Fukushima independent researchers can tell us the real story.”

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