

... FOR THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

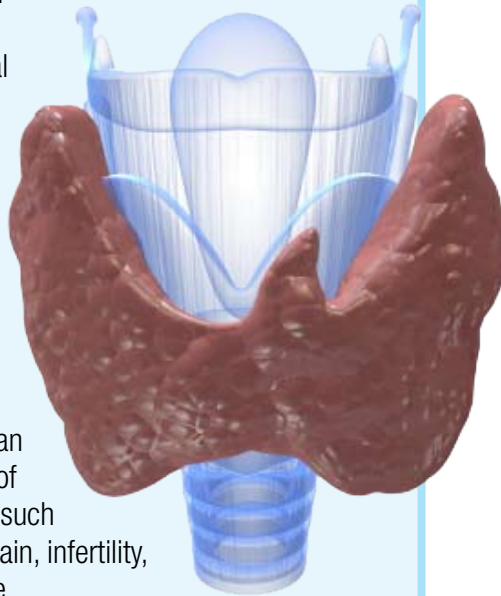
THYROID AWARENESS

WHAT IS YOUR THYROID GLAND AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

The thyroid gland secretes a vital hormone which primarily controls your body's metabolism.

Hypothyroidism:

Hypothyroidism upsets the normal balance of chemical reactions in your body. It seldom causes symptoms in the early stages, but over time, untreated hypothyroidism can cause a number of health problems, such as obesity, joint pain, infertility, and heart disease.



Hyperthyroidism: Hyperthyroidism is a disorder that occurs when the thyroid gland makes more thyroid hormone than the body needs. About 1 percent of the U.S. population has hyperthyroidism.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Men and women of all ages are susceptible to the disease but for reasons unknown, women, especially over the age of 50, are more likely to have hypothyroidism.

What Increases Your Risk

Many factors may increase your risk for developing hypothyroidism. These include:

- **Age and sex.** Older adults are more likely to develop hypothyroidism than younger people, and women are more likely than men to develop thyroid disease.
- **Family history.** Hypothyroidism tends to run in families.
- **Previous thyroid problems.** Thyroid disease, an enlarged thyroid, and surgery or radiation therapy to treat thyroid problems increase the likelihood of developing hypothyroidism in the future.
- **Some lifelong conditions.** Diabetes, vitiligo (an autoimmune disease that causes patches of light skin), pernicious anemia, and premature gray hair are seen more often in people with hypothyroidism.
- **Iodine deficiency.** This is rare in the United States but common in areas where iodine is not added to salt, food, and water.



WHAT CAUSES HYPOTHYROIDISM?

Hypothyroidism has several causes, including:

- Hashimoto's disease, an autoimmune disorder which usually affects women.
- Thyroiditis, or inflammation of the thyroid gland.
- Congenital hypothyroidism or hypothyroidism that is present at birth.
- Surgical removal of part or all of the thyroid gland.
- Radiation treatment of the thyroid.

Some medications such as:

- Amiodarone - a heart medication
- Interferon Alpha - a cancer medication
- Lithium - a bipolar disorder medication
- Interleukin-2 - a kidney cancer medication



Advanced hypothyroidism, known as myxedema, is rare, but when it occurs it can be life-threatening. Signs and symptoms include low blood pressure, decreased breathing, decreased body temperature, unresponsiveness, and even coma. In extreme cases, myxedema can be fatal.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HYPOTHYROIDISM:

- Greater sensitivity to cold
- Constipation
- Depression, feeling weak or fatigued
- Pain in the joints and muscles
- Excessive bleeding during menstruation
- Unexplained weight gain
- Dry or pale skin
- Thin, brittle hair and nails

The signs and symptoms of hypothyroidism vary widely depending on the severity of the hormone deficiency and may develop slowly.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF HYPERTHYROIDISM:

- Palpitations
- Heat intolerance
- Nervousness
- Insomnia
- Breathlessness
- Increased bowel movements
- Light or absent menstrual periods
- Fatigue
- Fast heart rate
- Trembling hands

HOW IS HYPOTHYROIDISM DIAGNOSED?

The good news is that accurate thyroid function tests are available to diagnose hypothyroidism, and treatment of hypothyroidism with synthetic thyroid hormone is usually simple, safe and effective once the proper dosage is established.

TESTING

Typically, diagnosis of hypothyroidism is based on your symptoms, and the results of blood tests that measure the level of TSH. A TSH test measures the amount of thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH) in your blood. TSH is produced by the pituitary gland and tells the thyroid gland to make and release the hormones thyroxine (T4) and triiodothyronine (T3). Also a carotid artery screen can detect any abnormalities.

TREATMENT

Doctors can either request more screening or testing if symptoms persist. Otherwise, doctors usually prescribe thyroid hormone pills to treat hypothyroidism. Most people start to feel better within a week or two. Your symptoms will probably go away within a few months.

It is important to take your medicine just the way your doctor indicates. You will also need to see your doctor for follow-up visits to make sure you have the right dose. Getting too much or too little thyroid hormone can cause problems. If you have mild hypothyroidism, you may not need treatment now. But you will want to watch closely for signs that it is getting worse.

RESOURCES

www.healthsolutions.org

www.mayoclinic.com

www.endocrine.niddk.nih.gov

www.nlm.nih.gov

For more information visit
www.WellnessCoachesUSA.com